BALLIOL COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

FLOREAT DOMUS

NEWS AND FEATURES FROM THE BALLIOL COMMUNITY | JUNE 2021

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FLOREAT DOMUS

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We are enormously grateful to everyone who has contributed to this magazine by writing an article, agreeing to be interviewed, providing photographs or information, or otherwise assisting the Editor. We are always pleased to receive feedback, and suggestions for articles: please send these to the Editor by email to anne.askwith@balliol.ox.ac.uk or at the address above.

Front cover photograph by Stuart Bebb.

From the Master

Dame Helen Ghosh DCB

In a 1919 letter to American alumni, the Master of Balliol A.L. Smith wrote, 'No-one can doubt that we are at a turning point in our national history. A new era has come upon us. We cannot stand still. We cannot return to the old ways, the old abuses, the old stupidities.' He continued, 'Only by rising to the height of our enlarged vision of social duty can we do justice to the spirit generated in our people by the long effort of common aspiration and common suffering … The public … has its mind open and receptive to new ideas to an unprecedented degree.'

Of course Arthur Smith was writing about the impact on British society of the First World War, in the context of work he had led for the Ministry of Reconstruction on Adult Education and the part it should play in rebuilding a just and democratic society. But I am reminded of his words when pundits say that post-pandemic 'Things will never be the same again'. I am always suspicious of that phrase, since it is so easy to revert to familiar ways of doing things, and positive change almost always needs determined action. If we want to make things better for the common good, we have to seize the opportunities the pandemic has presented.

There are many researchers in Oxford, across the medical and social sciences and humanities, who are at work on lessons for and impacts on the world. But what have we learned closer to home, about the College and its community, and what should we carry forward into the future?

In last year's *Floreat*, I expressed faith in our ability to adapt as an institution. I am still amazed by, and enormously grateful for, the hard work of all our academics and staff, and for the professionalism and speed with which we set ourselves up for virtual teaching and working from home – for example being ready for our students to take Collections online as Trinity Term began, as a dry run for those due to take Finals, Mods or Prelims later in

term – and for their continuing efforts through the year.

Becoming skilled in the use of new technologies has had all sorts of benefits we might not have anticipated, and which we need to hang on to. The series of online lectures so ably organised by our Development Office attracted hundreds of alumni in a way that 'in person' lectures in Oxford could never do. The same was true of our 'virtual' outreach work, whereby far more schools and pupils were able to take part in events than would have been possible (practically or financially) if the events had been in College. One unexpected piece of feedback from tutors on the experience of interviewing for admissions online was that many candidates from less advantaged backgrounds seemed more relaxed, since their environment was familiar to them. And although by doing exams online our Finalists missed the experience of going off to the Examination Schools complete with carnations (I gather that some Balliol Finalists put on sub fusc to take their exams in their rooms), examiners commented how much easier it was to read the scripts!

On the other hand, I know from talking to Freshers that the experience they have when they come up for interview is often one that reassures them that Oxford is indeed for people exactly like them, despite what they may read in the media, and that some of the friends they make during those few days remain friends for life. Though living so much of the past year in a virtual world, we have also learned how much place means to people. Online events for alumni are a wonderful addition to our range of offerings, but they are no substitute for being able to return in person to a place that has meant so much to so many, and to meet friends.

That seems equally true for our current students. We were able to offer practical and welfare support to students for whom study at home was particularly challenging, thanks to the generosity of alumni over many generations. But most of our students spent much of last year working away from Oxford, and levels of stress and anxiety were high across the whole student population. Following the recent lockdown, students rushed back to College the moment Government regulations allowed.

So the challenge will be to retain the good and learn from the bad. Laptops in the Examination Schools? 'Blended learning' for students, with some lectures online but face-to-face teaching where it really matters, in tutorials and small groups? Perhaps admissions initially online but with welcome events in College for successful candidates soon after? As I write at the beginning of Trinity Term we have more than 90% of our students in residence. It's a wonderful feeling. As much of College life resumes, we and the wider University will be looking to see how we can use the experiences of the pandemic to create a better future. As Arthur Smith said, 'We cannot stand still.'

Awards

New Year Honours 2021

Hugh Rolo (1975), Chair and Founding Member of the Key Fund: Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to social investment and enterprise in the Midlands and North of England.

Birthday Honours 2020

Geoffrey Mulgan CBE (1979), Chief Executive, NESTA: Knighthood, for services to the Creative Economy.

Professor Keith Hawton (1966), consultant psychiatrist, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Professor of Psychiatry, University of Oxford: Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), for services to suicide prevention.


Carol Higgins

Clare Moriarty (1982), lately Permanent Secretary, Department for Exiting the European Union and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Dame Commander of the Order of the Bath (DCB), for public service.

Andrew Gilmour (1983), Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, United Nations, New York, USA: Companion of the Order of St Michael and S. George (CMG), for services to human rights.

Dissolution Peerages 2019

Jo Johnson PC (1991), lately Member of Parliament for Orpington and Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation.

Fellows of the British Academy

Rosalind Thomas (Professor of Greek History, Dyson-Macgregor Fellow, Jowett Lecturer and Tutor in Ancient History), a specialist in the ancient history of Greece and Rome, especially archaic and classical Greek history (9th century–4th century BC). Her most recent publication is *Polis Histories, Collective Memories and the Greek World* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), which examines the writing of such histories as a mass phenomenon in the late Classical and early Hellenistic world, re-examines their content and tendencies, and interprets them as a cultural as well as a political phenomenon which speaks to the times in which they were produced.

Charles Baden-Fuller (1966), Centenary Professor of Strategy at City, University of London, and Fellow of the Strategic Management Society. His research in strategy blends insights into the internal firm dynamics and external competitive actions, looking at issues such as alliances, knowledge management, formation of high technology firms, and most recently the challenges of managing behavioural customer data – balancing the need for privacy with that of finding new sources of profit.

Professor Richard Hyman (1961), Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations, London School of Economics. Professor Hyman has been one of the most prominent figures in British and European employment relations research for most of the past four decades. He has written extensively on the themes of comparative industrial relations, collective bargaining, trade unionism, industrial conflict and labour market policy. His books have encouraged generations of students, researchers, and activists to view the employment relationship in its wider social and political context.

Senior Members

Samuel Albanie (Research Fellow in the Sciences) and colleagues in the Visual Geometry Group at Oxford's Department of Engineering Science won the Songde Ma Prize at the biennial ACCV computer vision conference for a paper on sign language.


Stuart Bebb

Diana Berruezo-Sánchez (Career Development Fellow in Modern Languages): awarded the Ramón y Cajal Research Fellowships by the Ministry of Innovation in Spain, at the University of Barcelona.

Brian Foster (Donald H. Perkins Professor of Experimental Physics and Professorial Fellow): made an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Physics.

John-Paul Ghobrial (Associate Professor, Lucas Fellow and Tutor in History): awarded a European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant worth €2 million for a project called 'Moving Stories', which combines the study of mobile sectarianisms with the use of neglected family archives and papers of Middle Eastern migrants in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is the second time he has won such a grant.

Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture (Allen Lane, 2020) by **Sudhir Hazareesingh** (CUF Lecturer in Politics and Tutorial Fellow in Politics): shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize 2021, Baillie Gifford Prize 2020 and Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize, 2020, and a finalist for the Pen/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography, 2020.

Francisco Marmolejo-Cossio (Career Development Fellow in Computer Science): awarded a Fellowship at Harvard University's Centre for Research on Computation and Society (CRCS), the focus of which is on the societal and economic implications of blockchain technology.

Adam Nahum (Supernumerary Fellow and Research Fellow in the Sciences at Balliol 2017–2020): awarded the Philippe Meyer Prize for Theoretical Physics 2020.

Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge under Attack (John Murray, 2020) by **Richard Ovenden** (Bodley's Librarian and Professorial Fellow): shortlisted for Wolfson History Prize 2021.

Armin Reichold (Reader in Particle Physics, Fellow and Tutor and Physics): received a Recognition of Distinction award, and with it the title of Professor of Physics.

Jin-Chong Tan (Professor of Engineering Science (Nanoscale Engineering), Fellow and Tutor in Engineering Science): won the 2020 ISIS Science Impact Award for his group's work on lattice dynamics in Metal-Organic Frameworks.

Junior Members

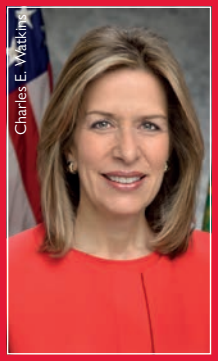
Roman Rothaermel with co-founder of Neurolytic Healthcare Inna Thalmann

Neurolytic Healthcare, co-founded by **Roman Rothaermel** (2016, DPhil Neuroscience) – now a cross-disciplinary team including **Kumeren Govender** (2018, DPhil Clinical Medicine), and supported by the Balliol Interdisciplinary Institute: won 'Best Overall Idea' in All-Innovate 2020, Oxford University's flagship ideas competition.

Felix Simon (2019, DPhil in Information, Communication & Social Sciences): won a Knight News Innovation Fellowship at Columbia University's Tow Center for the Study of Digital Journalism.

Old Members

The Hon Bob Rae PC QC (1969): appointed Canada's ambassador to the United Nations.



Liz Sherwood-Randall (1981): appointed Homeland Security Adviser in the Biden administration.

James J. Collins (1987): awarded the 2020 Dickson Prize for Medicine by the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Professor John Tasioulas (1989 and Senior Research Fellow): appointed Director of Oxford University's Institute for Ethics in AI.

Lindy Cameron (1991): appointed Chief Executive Officer of the National Cyber Security Centre.

Professor James Maynard (2009): elected to the Academia Europaea.

Mirela Ivanova (2015): selected as a 2021 New Generation Thinker by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and BBC Radio 3.

Anna Gier (2015): runner-up for the R. Gapper Undergraduate Essay Prize 2020, awarded by the Society for French Studies.

Francesco Ibba (2016): selected as a finalist for the Reaxys PhD Prize 2020.

See more in News and Notes, a supplement to this magazine.

Improved accessibility

A new ramp facilitating access from the Lodge down into the Front Quad has been installed. It makes the front entrance to Balliol fully accessible now; previously, disabled access was via the back gate onto Magdalen Street East. The ramp's wrought iron railings are by designer and blacksmith James Price, who also made the electronic gates in the Lodge. The installation of the ramp and railings completes the Porters' Lodge refurbishment (see *Floreat Domus 2020*). The restoration of the paths in the Fellows' Garden in April 2020 has also improved ease of access in the outdoor spaces at the Broad Street site.

Supporting sixth-formers

Balliol has collaborated with Hertford and Wadham Colleges on Springboard, an initiative to support sixth-form students who have missed out on vital university visits, lectures and academic workshops because of the pandemic.

Through videos presented by Oxford graduate students, including Balliol students, the project hopes to engage sixth-formers in learning about interesting topics that are linked to their A-Level studies and consider the connections between these topics and different undergraduate degree courses. About 15 minutes long, the videos serve as an introduction to a subject and offer a window into the diversity of research interests at Oxford and the bigger, often interdisciplinary questions Oxford students explore in their studies. Viewers take part in activities and are invited to explore further resources after they have finished watching. The sessions go beyond content covered in the school curriculum, thus enabling students to deepen their knowledge and increase their understanding of what studying at university is like.

Springboard is an initiative by the Oxford for East England consortium, which brings Balliol, Hertford and Wadham together to support schools and students in the East of England region. You can watch the Springboard videos at www.ox.ac.uk/oxfordforEE/springboard.

Balliol Springboard presenters (clockwise from top left) Kate Reed (2019, MPhil Economic and Social History); Petros Spanou (2017, DPhil History); Daria Tserkovnaya (2020, DPhil Population Health); Sam Shepherd (2017, DPhil Mathematics)


Stuart Bebb

New student rooms completed

With the completion of Phase Two of the Master's Field Project, Balliol is for the first time able to offer accommodation to undergraduate students for all the years of their course. New rooms for graduate students are also now available.

From the beginning of Michaelmas Term 2021, undergraduates will occupy the rooms completed in Phase One (currently occupied by graduates): these are in four accommodation blocks grouped around a large beech tree and accessed from Jowett Walk. At the same time, graduates will move in to the four newly completed buildings at the other end of the site, accessed from St Cross Road and opposite Holywell Manor, the centre of Balliol's graduate community. All the student rooms are arranged in clusters of 4–6 around a social space; many of them enjoy views on to Balliol's sportsground. Altogether there are 69 undergraduate rooms and 148 graduate rooms, as well as seven sets for Fellows and a penthouse apartment for the George Eastman Visiting Professor.

The centrepiece of the development is a brand-new pavilion, comprising a main hall, with squash courts and changing rooms underneath. Landscaping around the whole site, including paths and trees, has also been completed, as have external fittings such as gates and bicycle stands.

Hitherto the new buildings have been named by letter – Block A, Block B, etc. At the time of going to press, the College is – in consultation with the students – considering names for them. The names will be of people reflecting Balliol's history and values.

The project, which began in 2018, was managed by property consultancy Bidwells, designed by Níall McLaughlin Architects and built by BAM Construction. It is hoped that, with the easing Covid-19 restrictions, it will be possible to hold a formal opening ceremony later in the year.


Stuart Bebb

Graduate accommodation blocks seen from the Master's Field sportsground (above) and (below) undergraduate accommodation blocks seen from Jowett Walk. More photographs will be posted on the Balliol website as soon as they become available.

Balliol and Empire

In 2019 the College launched the Balliol and Empire project, led by the Master, to provide a focus for students and Fellows interested in further exploring Balliol's historical and contemporary ties to different aspects of British imperialism, anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles, and post colonialism. Continuing and deepening the long tradition of Balliol research and scholarship in these areas, the project has established a new and extended programme of research, lectures and events.

Research

Balliol has long been known for its role as an educator of colonial administrators in the 19th and 20th centuries, under the enthusiasm of Benjamin Jowett (Master 1870–1893). As Professor Judith Brown (Emeritus Fellow, Beit Professor of Commonwealth History 1990–2011) has shown in *Windows into the Past* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), Balliol's connections went well beyond its three alumni, the Marquis of Lansdowne (1863), the Earl of Elgin (1869) and Lord Curzon (1878), who were successively Viceroys of India between 1888 and 1905.

The College also played a role in anti-colonial struggles and critiques, including through Rajani Palme Dutt (1914), a staunch opponent of Western imperialism, Raphael Samuel (1952), a student of Christopher Hill (1931, Tutorial Fellow in History 1938–1965, Master 1965–1978) and one of the pioneers of radical history and the New Left in Britain, and Christopher Hitchens (1967), prominent in the counter-cultural movements of late 1960s and 1970s. Their work, and that of many other alumni including those who joined the British Civil and Colonial services after 1945 and were closely involved in implementing decolonisation, merit further research.

Current Balliol students and Fellows also continue to be prominent in academic research on colonialism, responses to historical injustice, and in re-examining what a more strongly global society means for the curricula and teaching at Oxford, as well as in wider academia. Among them, Daniel Butt (Tutorial Fellow in Political Theory) has published widely on reparative justice and is the author of *Rectifying International Injustice: Principles of Compensation and Restitution Between Nations* (OUP, 2008).

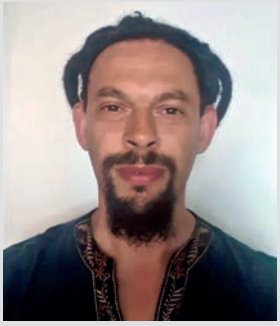
There is more about this history and other research aspects of the Balliol and Empire project online: www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/balliol-and-empire

Events and lectures

Among the Balliol and Empire events held so far was a symposium to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahtama Gandhi, who stayed at Balliol twice in 1931 at the invitation of A.D. Lindsay (Master 1924–1949), leaving one of Balliol's prized possessions in the form of his signature in the Master's Visitors' Book. In collaboration with the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development at Somerville College and attended by Her Excellency Ms Ruchi Ghanashyam, the Indian High Commissioner to the UK, and Lord Patten of Barnes, Chancellor of Oxford University (1962), the symposium was divided into two panel discussions with contributions from distinguished academics, as described in *Floreat Domus* 2019.

Three recent lectures have addressed different aspects of recent contestations, from statues and memorials to the curriculum. In 'What Do We Mean When We Talk about Statues' Rahul Rao (2001), Senior Lecturer in Politics at SOAS, considered why statues are invested with so much significance. In the second talk, Marisa J. Fuentes (Associate Professor in History at Rutgers University and Oliver Smithies Visiting Fellow 2019/2020) focused on the politics of statues and memorials representing slavery and the legacy of white supremacy in the United States and the recent momentum of historicising these legacies at American Universities in general. In the third, Professor Robbie Shilliam (Hedley Bull Junior Research Fellow in International Relations at Oxford 2005–2007), of Johns Hopkins University, gave the 2021 Omar Azfar Lecture, 'Decolonizing Politics', based on his book of that name (Polity, 2021), which he wrote to help undergraduates to think critically and more precisely about current day controversies over decolonizing the academy. A transcript of the lecture is available on request to development.office@balliol.ox.ac.uk.

Marisa Fuentes



Robbie Shilliam

Early depiction of Toussaint Louverture in an abolitionist journal, from the collection of Oliver Franklin

Oliver St Clair Franklin

Sudhir Hazareesingh

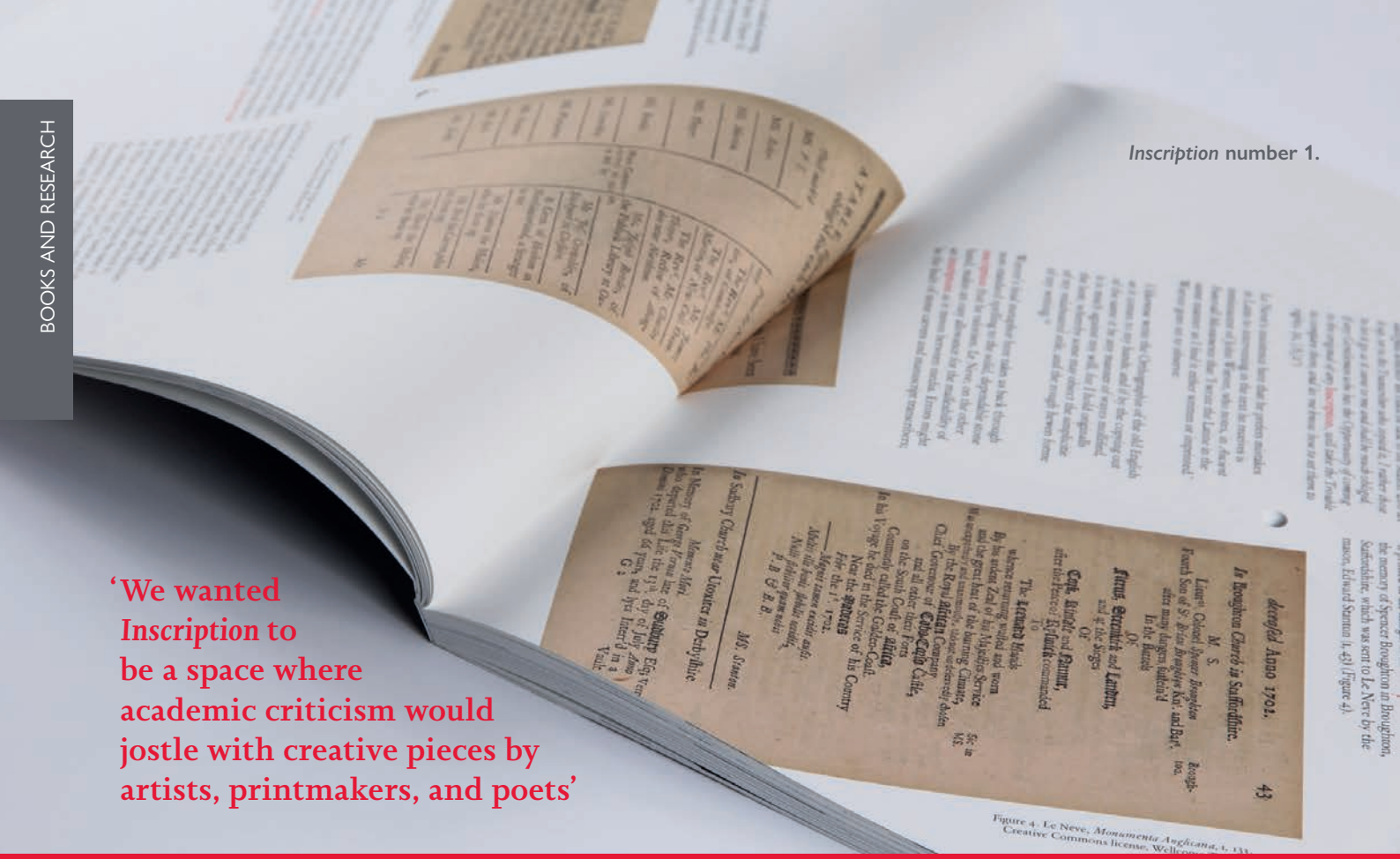
Forthcoming exhibition on Slavery in the Age of Revolution

In September 2021, Balliol Library will present 'Slavery in the Age of Revolution', an exhibition examining the Transatlantic Slave Trade at the turbulent end of the 18th century through the lens of the College's history and its collections. The exhibition was conceived by Oliver St Clair Franklin (1967 and Honorary Fellow), who was inspired by *Black Spartacus* (Allen Lane, 2020), Sudhir Hazareesingh's biography of the Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture and his struggle against slavery, settler colonialism and imperialism; Oliver Franklin has also loaned exhibits from his own collection. Co-curated by Marisa Fuentes, Sudhir Hazareesingh (Tutorial Fellow in Politics), Aishah Olubaji and Naomi Tiley (Library team), and Professor Seamus Perry (Massey Fellow and Tutor in English), the exhibition aims to explore narratives of resistance to slavery and the voices of enslaved people. A trailer shows some of the material from Balliol's historic collections that will feature: https://youtu.be/7zdt4or2mto

Study on Balliol and the Proceeds of Slavery

A new piece of research in the Balliol and Empire programme, commissioned in 2019, was a study to establish the extent to which Balliol's endowment included funds linked to the proceeds of slavery. Sebastian Raj Pender (Research Associate) examined the College's records of benefactions made between 1600 and 1919 and found that, of the 379 benefactors who made financial or material contributions totalling more than £1,000 (when adjusted for purchasing power today), 39 came from individuals with substantive links to the proceeds of slavery. Taken together, these benefactions contributed a total of around £300,000 when adjusted for today's prices, or as much as £2m when adjusted for today's average incomes. Preliminary results have been presented at a series of seminars in College, chaired by the Master, at which participants discussed what the findings mean for Balliol, Oxford University, and society today. Once the study is completed and peer reviewed later this year, it will be published along with the College's response.

Sebastian Raj Pender



Inscription number 1.

'We wanted Inscription to be a space where academic criticism would jostle with creative pieces by artists, printmakers, and poets'

Figure 4: Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, 5, 133. Creative Commons license, Wellcome

'Make it new'

Adam Smyth (Professor of English Literature and the History of the Book, and Tutorial Fellow) describes the creation of a new journal

Would you start a printed journal in a year of pandemic and lockdown? Perhaps not; but I liked the sense of maximal challenge. And so I spent a sizeable chunk of 2020 – alongside the home-schooling, and the scrambled reformulation of dissertations and Finals papers – ushering into life *Inscription: The Journal of Material Text – Theory, Practice, History* (published by Information as Material).

I was working with two colleagues, Dr Gill Partington (Exeter University) and Professor Simon Morris (Leeds Beckett University), and we hoped to achieve three things. The first was to launch a hard-copy journal that would provide a venue for brilliant, cutting-edge scholarship on the study of material texts. Thinking about 'material texts' means thinking about the ways

'*Inscription* is an experiment in format, design, and typography.'

in which writing is written, circulated, and preserved: not just the meanings and uses of the codex book, but also the nature of writing surfaces (papery or otherwise), and the processes of mark-marking in the widest possible sense, from hand-press printing to vapour trails in the sky; from engraved stones to digital text; and from the ancient past to today. So we assembled for *Inscription* issue one – published late 2020 – articles about 18th-century epitaphs that were cut into stone, written by hand, and also printed; Kafka's notebooks and his writing process; missing, damaged, repaired and restored pages in 16th-century Bibles; parchment making; hand-press printing; lithography; the collection of thousands of books and prints assembled by Sir Hans Sloane (d. 1753) that today forms the core of the British Library; transcriptions of bird song; note-taking practices; and more.

Our second aim was to produce a journal that would function a bit like a gallery for creative work. Instead of walls we'd have pages, but we hoped reading *Inscription* would resemble the experience of walking through a series of rooms. We wanted *Inscription* to be a space where academic criticism would jostle with creative pieces by artists, printmakers, and poets. This jostling would probably be friendly – a sort of

dance, or an interested sizing up – but it might also be bemused, or even a little bit antagonistic. Issue one comes with a vinyl LP of author Sean Ashton reading from his novel *Living in a Land*; a specially commissioned spiral print by French erasure artist Jérémie Bennequin; a poetry booklet by Craig Dworkin about Robert Smithson's earthwork *Spiral Jetty*, based around the *Fibonacci* sequence; an augmented reality piece by Craig Saper and Ian Truelove; and a cover by New York artist Erica Baum.

Our third aim was to produce a journal whose own materiality would make readers pause and think about the process of reading: *Inscription* is an experiment in format, design, and typography. It has a strange shape: square, with a hole drilled through the middle; a strange size, 31.4 × 31.4 cm, the dimensions of a vinyl LP; a strange orientation, with pages that rotate clockwise by roughly three degrees each page, scattering footnotes to the top, bottom and sides as if by centrifugal force; and a strange format, printed dos-à-dos, from both ends, meaning there are two beginnings which collide in a central spiral.

We were trying to do something different, particularly within the sometimes cloistered and tidy world of academic journal publishing, but we also had clear precedents in mind. I've long been fascinated by that period of literary modernism in the first half of the 20th century when journals were the crucial medium through which new writing reached the world – like Harriet Shaw Weaver's *The Egoist*, which in 1919 part-serialised James Joyce's *Ulysses*; or Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*, founded with the help of Ezra Pound as the voice of the Vorticist movement in 1914; or Harriet Munroe's *Poetry* magazine which from 1912 published early work by Wallace Stevens, H.D., and T.S. Eliot, and which, triumphantly, still exists today.

But perhaps the biggest single influence was *Aspen* (1965–71), a New York-based multimedia magazine edited by Phyllis Johnson that rather wonderfully took the form of a box containing a miscellany of inclusions, including posters, booklets, and, in the language of the time, a 'flexidisc' phonograph recording. Below you can see my copy of issue four: it's based around the work on Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan; was designed by Quentin Fiore; and features, among its loose box-held parts, a record of early electronic music by Mario Davidovsky and Gordon Mumma, plus a John Cage prose poem titled 'How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)'. Later editions of *Aspen* featured pieces by Andy Warhol, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Timothy Leary, Morton Feldman, Robert Rauschenberg, Yoko Ono and John Lennon, and a pre-publication excerpt of J.G. Ballard's *Crash*.

***Inscription* in parts: (clockwise from top left) the main journal, complete with hole drilled through the centre; Jérémie Bennequin's spiral print (folded); Craig Dworkin's poetry booklet, 'Clock'; and Sean Ashton's LP.**

Editors Gill Partington, Simon Morris, and Adam Smyth, reading fresh-off-the-press *Inscription* number one outside the Sheldonian Theatre.

***Aspen* magazine number 4 (spring 1967).**

Phyllis Johnson called *Aspen* 'the first three-dimensional magazine', but in fact the original meaning of 'magazine' as something like a depot or holder for goods – from the Arabic *maḵzin*, *maḵzan* ('storehouse'), from *ḵazana* ('*store up*') – already anticipates this sense of a spacious container.

Aspen and *The Egoist* and the rich 20th-century history of literary magazines set a high standard to emulate, both in content and in material form, and we hope *Inscription* will be in part a homage to his history of inventive, imaginative journal publishing. We may yet find our own Susan Sontag or Andy Warhol among our contributors. At the time of writing, we're starting work on number 2, themed around 'holes', which should appear in the world in September 2021.

If you'd like to know more about the journal – or indeed if you'd like to subscribe! – do please email me at adam.smyth@balliol.ox.ac.uk. Letters on parchment or vapour trails in the distant sky are also accepted.

What should we do about the climate emergency?

Alice Evatt (DPhil Climate Ethics, 2017) writes about some of the questions she is tackling

A year ago today as I write this, Australia was on fire. Over 17 million hectares were burnt. For comparison, that's an area the size of most of England, from Durham to Brighton, including all of London and, yes, Oxford.

By the end of what has been referred to as the 'black summer', with days so darkened by smoke it looked like the middle of night, 830 million tonnes of CO_2 had been emitted (more than Australia's annual average) and over 1 billion animals had been killed – a figure which excludes bats, frogs and fish. If we were to include insects, the number would jump to around 240 billion. This destruction was something we had been warned about; it is a part of the climate emergency.

Why should we care about the climate crisis? What should we do? Who should do it? These are the kinds of questions I tackle as a DPhil student working on climate ethics. Specifically, I am working on a thesis which explores unexamined territory regarding responsibility: from loss and damage, to morally culpable agents, to the nature of climate responsibility itself.

Although the questions above seem simple, they can often be difficult to answer, unpack and defend.

Take responsibility – the question of who is to blame and who ought to be doing something. When we think about who is responsible, we often think of individuals, countries, and, notably, fossil fuel companies as the main offenders. We hold the fossil fuel industry and large companies like ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell responsible; we take them to court (or at least try to), we divest, we demand change. Yet agribusinesses – major meat and dairy corporations, for example – are likewise major contributors to the climate emergency. And we have more or less left the agricultural industry alone. JBS, Carson and Cargill are not staples of household vocabulary, let alone the climate indictment one. This is despite the fact that these three companies combined emit more greenhouse gases (GHGs) per year than BP – 484 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent; and the top 20 agribusinesses annually emit more than Germany does (see opposite).

'Why should we care about the climate crisis? What should we do? Although the questions above seem simple, they can often be difficult to answer.'

Blackened trees in Australia following the bush fires of 2020.

Why do we treat these industries so differently, given that they both contribute to the same problem in similar ways? Are major agribusinesses culpable and blameworthy for climate change in the same respect as the fossil fuel sector? Or is there perhaps a salient difference between the two industries that would exculpate the former and relieve them from blame and duty?

The way countries answer such questions actively shapes climate policies. An example is found again in Australia (you might have guessed my nationality at this point), whose Deputy Prime Minister recently suggested that agriculture should be excluded from 2050 net zero emissions targets. A similar stance has been adopted in New Zealand, whose 2050 GHG reduction plan exempts methane from plant and animal sources.

One of my DPhil projects unpacks the role of agribusiness and argues that this industry is accountable for the crisis and must be taken into account in net zero equations. Such a position is, at present, noticeably absent from the literature on climate responsibility.

Even when we are convinced of who should be held responsible and required to act, we can come up against relentless opposition.

Despite strong, seemingly irrefutable arguments for the causal and moral responsibility of fossil fuel companies for emissions and climate harms, a significant portion of these companies continue to deny their responsibility for emissions that arise when *consumers* use and burn their fuels: when we drive cars, when an energy utility company burns fuel – so-called 'scope 3 emissions'.

How do fossil fuel companies think that they can successfully deny such culpability for the effects of their products? One counter-argument is that they are simply selling us what we want, or at least what we continue to buy and rely on, and that it is the consumer, not the producer, who is causally, and therefore morally, responsible.

It is no surprise to reveal that I think these companies are responsible – specifically, that they share a great deal of joint or partial culpability alongside other agents. And examining the kinds of possible (albeit unsuccessful) counter-arguments open to them is eye-opening. It makes us think hard about the role of each agent in bringing about this crisis; about the complicated causal story and the explanation we must give in order to link not only emissions but also distant and future climate harms to these companies. Furthermore, it makes us tackle hard, practical questions such as what exactly these companies ought to be doing to rectify the situation. Should the focus be on stopping further harm and fuel-related activities immediately? Should it be on reparations for damage already done and set in motion? Are these two duties compatible or conflicting? If they conflict, which one should take precedence?

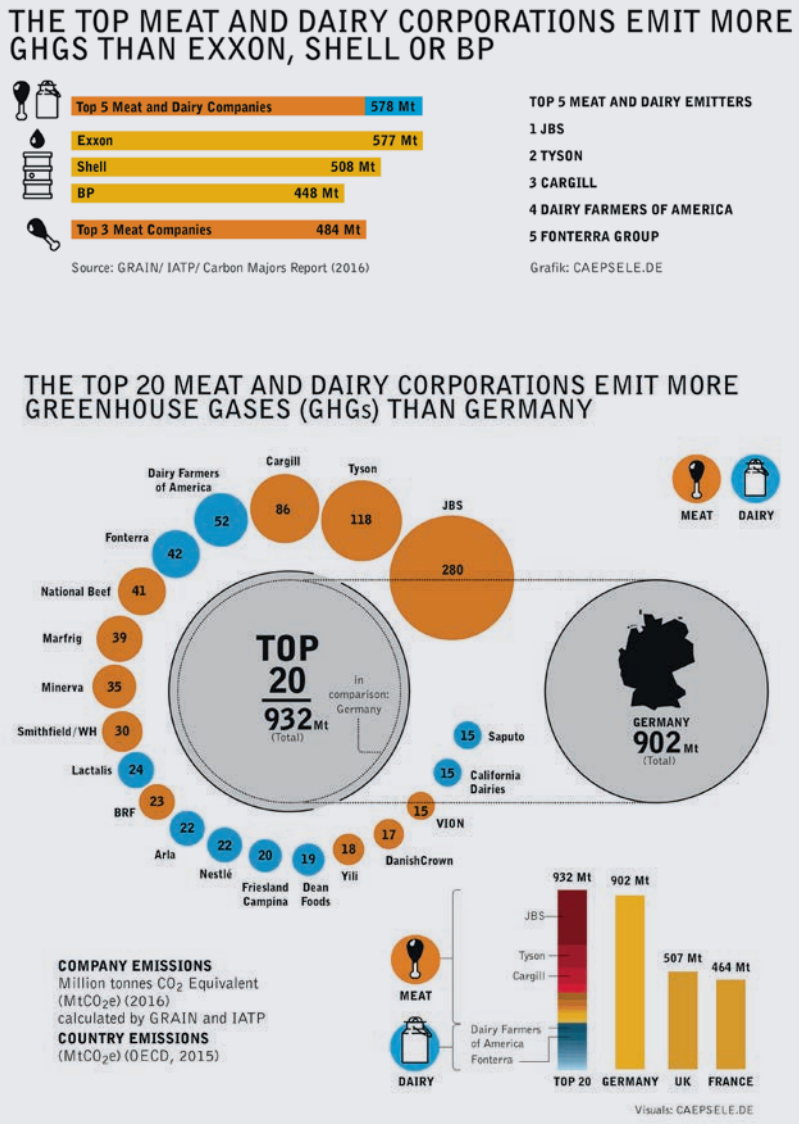
The above are a few examples of the kind of work I do. With it, I hope that I will not only be able to broaden discussion and understanding in climate ethics, but also drive progress on climate action, policy and engagement at Oxford University and beyond, especially in Australia.

Alongside my work, I had the pleasure of being last year's Director of Outreach for the Oxford Climate Society, as well as leading the development and team behind the Oxford Climate Alumni Network (OxCAN), which we launched last September. This network is designed to bring alumni, students and researchers together to tackle the crisis. It's been inspiring to see so many passionate alumni – currently over 600, from 56 different countries and 32 colleges – come together to act and engage on this issue.

One word in particular describes being able to pursue such work at Balliol and Oxford: thrilling.

Without doubt, the interdisciplinary exchange here has shaped much of my work. My focus on agribusiness, for instance, was sparked by groundbreaking research being done by Livestock, Environment and People (LEAP) at the Oxford Martin School. Pre-Covid, it was commonplace to share a seminar, a discussion, a coffee, with pre-eminent figures in the field, and work closely with peers, alumni and others to further the climate agenda. The community here – researchers across multiple departments, the College, student groups, the administration, and now the alumni – feels like the centre of action and progress on climate. Balliol in particular has an incredible climate working group consisting of staff and students who together made more than 30 green changes to Balliol's operations in the last year alone.

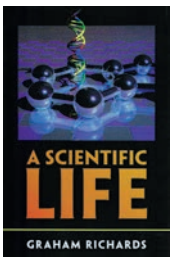
To alumni reading this, I hope you'll join us and get involved in the climate work going on at Oxford! Register for OxCAN at www.oxfordclimatealumni.com.



IATP, GRAIN and Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2017

Bookshelf

Graham Richards (Junior Research Fellow 1964–66 and Honorary Fellow)
A Scientific Life
Author House, 2021



Professor Graham Richards CBE FRS was head of Oxford's Chemistry Department 1997–2007. His research was largely in the area of computer-aided drug design, of which he was a pioneer. He was also involved in the creation of high-tech companies based on University intellectual property: he was the scientific founder of Oxford Molecular Group, which grew from a £350,000 start-up to a public company with a market capitalisation at its height of £450 million, and was involved in the creation of Oxford University Innovation Ltd and of IP Group Plc. This is his autobiography.

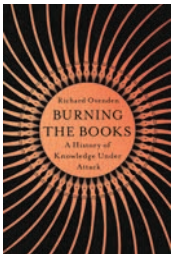
Dame Stephanie Shirley (Foundation Fellow)
So to Speak
Dame Stephanie Shirley CH, 2020

Dame Stephanie Shirley CH (aged 87) is a workplace revolutionary and IT entrepreneur turned ardent philanthropist. Here she brings together 29 of her favourite speeches, given over the last 40 years, in one volume. The speeches cover all aspects of her life, from the start of her woman's company in 1962 to being the mother of an autistic son. One of the best known is 'My Family in Exile', the story of her family's escape from the Holocaust in 1939; another is her 2015 TED Talk 'Why Women Have Flat Heads', given to an assembly of thousands and viewed online over 2 million times. Dame Stephanie says she's 'constantly touched and uplifted by the audience reaction' – 'Inspirational' is the word often used. All proceeds go to the charity Autistica.

Michael Sandel (1975)
The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?
Allen Lane, 2020

Philosopher Michael Sandel (Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of Government at the University of Harvard) argues that to overcome the polarised politics of our time and restore social solidarity, we must rethink the attitudes towards success and failure that have accompanied globalisation and rising inequality. He highlights the hubris a meritocracy generates among the winners and the harsh judgement it imposes on those left behind. He offers an alternative way of thinking about success – more attentive to the role of luck in human affairs, more conducive to an ethic of humility, and more hospitable to a politics of the common good.

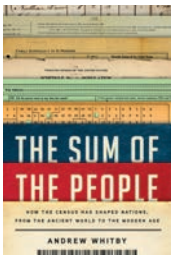
Richard Ovenden (Bodley's Librarian and Professorial Fellow)
Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge Under Attack
John Murray, 2020



Burning the Books takes readers on a 3,000-year journey, explaining how attacks on libraries and archives have been a feature of history since ancient times and describing the fight to preserve the knowledge that such attacks destroy. Exploring everything from what really happened to the Great Library of Alexandria to John Murray's burning of Byron's memoirs in the name of censorship, it is a history both of civilisation and of the people whose efforts to preserve knowledge seek to ensure that civilisation survives, and a manifesto for the vital importance of physical libraries in the digital age.

'Passionate and illuminating' *The Times*

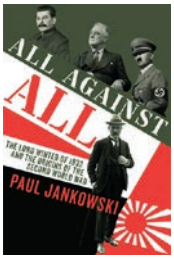
Andrew Whitby (2007)
The Sum of the People: How the Census Has Shaped Nations, From the Ancient World to the Modern Age
Basic Books, 2020



Data scientist Andrew Whitby traces the history of the census and the statisticians who conduct it, from ancient China and the Roman Empire, through revolutionary America and Nazi-occupied Europe, to the steps of the Supreme Court. He shows that as marvels of democracy, instruments of exclusion, and, at worst, tools of tyranny and genocide, censuses have always profoundly shaped the societies we have built; and that today, as we struggle to resist the creep of mass surveillance, the traditional census – direct and transparent – may offer the seeds of an alternative.

'An entertaining and informative story, more about society than statistics.' *The Economist*

Paul Jankowski (1967)
All Against All: The Long Winter of 1933 and the Origins of the Second World War
Profile Books, 2020



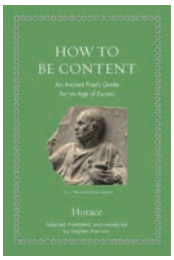
Paul Jankowski (Raymond Ginger Professor of History at Brandeis University) reveals the collective mentalities and popular beliefs that drove the crucial period between November 1932 and April 1933 and, as much as the rational calculus of 'national interest', set nations on the path to war. Weaving together stories from across the world, he offers a cautionary tale relevant for Western democracies today. The rising threat from dictatorial regimes and the ideological challenges from communism and fascism gave the 1930s a unique face, just as global environmental and demographic crises are shaping our own precious age.

Michel Paradis (2004)
Last Mission to Tokyo: The Extraordinary Story of the Doolittle Raiders and Their Final Fight for Justice
Simon & Schuster, 2020

In the Doolittle Raid in 1942, 16 US planes did what no one had done for more than a thousand years: they struck the mainland of Japan. In doing so they permanently turned the tide of the Second World War in the Pacific. Michel Paradis, a legal scholar, tells the story of the mission, and the heroism and bravery it involved, as well as its dramatic aftermath, which culminated in an international war crimes trial in 1945 that defined Japanese-American relations and changed legal history.

'… a thoroughly compelling true story of legal intrigue in the most unexpected of settings. Impeccably researched and beautifully written, it captures the reader with the first sentence and never lets go.' John Grisham

Horace and Stephen Harrison (1978)
How to Be Content: An Ancient Poet's Guide for an Age of Excess
Princeton University Press, 2020



The poet Horace (65–8 BCE) has long been cherished by readers not only for his wit, style, and reflections on Roman society, but also for his wisdom about how to live a good life. He drew on Greek and Roman philosophy to write poems that reflect on how to live a thoughtful and moderate life amid mindless overconsumption, how to achieve and maintain true love and friendship, and how to face disaster and death with patience and courage. In his selection Stephen Harrison. Professor of Latin Literature at Oxford University, provides fresh translations of, and commentary on, poems from across Horace's works that continue to offer important lessons about contentment today.

Alison Rosenblitt (2002)
The Beauty of Living: E.E. Cummings in the Great War
W.W. Norton, 2020

In this biography of E. E. Cummings' early life, Alison Rosenblitt probes an underexamined yet formative time in the poet's life, including his Massachusetts upbringing, undergraduate experience at Harvard, and his First World War ambulance service in France and subsequent unjust imprisonment in a detention centre. Weaving together letters, journal entries and sketches with analyses of poems, she shows how these experiences provided inspiration for his poetry and helped him find his own style and voice, and she illuminates his ideas about love, justice, humanity, and brutality.

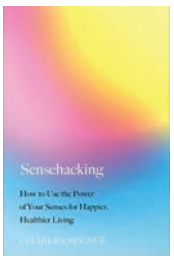
'A perceptive, captivating portrait' Kirkus Reviews

Martin Conway (Professor of Contemporary European History, MacLellan-Warburg Fellow and Tutor in History)
Western Europe's Democratic Age 1945–1968
Princeton University Press, 2020

What happened in the years following the Second World War to create a democratic revolution in the western half of Europe? In *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, Martin Conway provides an innovative account of how a stable, durable, and remarkably uniform model of parliamentary democracy emerged in Western Europe – and how this democratic ascendancy held fast until the latter decades of the 20th century.

'A scholarly work of history that displays a deep knowledge of different political cultures, [the book] offers valuable context for today's crisis of liberal democracy.' *Financial Times*

Charles Spence (1988)
Sensehacking: How to Use the Power of Your Senses for Happier, Healthier Living
Viking, 2021



How can the furniture in your home affect your well-being? What colour clothing will help you play sport better? And what simple trick will calm you after a tense day at work? In this book, Oxford professor Charles Spence, expert in multisensory perception, explores how the senses are stimulated in nature, at home, in the workplace and at play. Using cutting-edge science, Spence shows how the senses interact and affect our minds and bodies, changing how we think and feel, and how by 'hacking' them we can reduce stress, become more productive and be happier.

Mick Herron (1981)
Slough House
John Murray, 2021

As the first book in his spy series, *Slow Horses*, is being made into a film by Apple TV, Mick Herron publishes the seventh.

At Slough House – MI5's London depository for demoted spies – Brexit has taken a toll. The 'slow horses' have been pushed further into the cold, Slough House has been erased from official records, and its members are dying in unusual circumstances. No wonder Jackson Lamb's crew is feeling paranoid. But are they actually targets? With a new populist movement taking hold of London's streets and the old order ensuring that everything's for sale to the highest bidder, the world's a dangerous place for Jackson Lamb and the slow horses.

'[*Slough House*] is the best yet. The jokes are frequent and good, the pacing first rate, and the plot pieces, the moves and countermoves, snap as satisfyingly into place as anything I've read in the genre.' *Times Literary Supplement*

A leafy sanctuary

Head Gardener Chris Munday often overhears visitors say, 'I've walked past many times but never realised all this was in here: it's like a sanctuary.' Here he selects some of the mature trees that play a special part in this effect.

Purple beech

Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea

I have an ongoing deal with the large purple beech that towers over the gardeners' shed by the Trinity College wall. In exchange for me raking up copious debris – bud scales and flower fluff in the spring; nuts and leaves in autumn – the tree gives cooling shade in a heatwave, somewhere to take a break, eat lunch, pot up plants, and so on. And in a summer downpour it is my giant umbrella. I am sometimes asked how old the tree is and as our records are poor on this I have to be vague and say 'about 250 years'. I could measure the trunk and make calculations using Mitchell's Rule, but there are so many factors involved – position, soil fertility, drainage – that it might be inaccurate. About 250 years it is, then. The leaves are the final gift of the year, although it is a strange kind of 'gift' that requires so much chasing of leaves as they are sent skittering around College on the autumn winds. Stacked away tidily and kept moist for two years, copper transmutes into 'black gold': leaf mould that we add to the flower beds and to a potting compost mix that reduces our use of commercial potting mediums and their plastic bags.

The other purple beech stands over our spring flower 'meadow' and when the leaves are fresh and new it contrasts beautifully with the golden leaves of the *Gleditsia* 'Sunburst' next to it. It is difficult for me, try as I might, to take credit for this combination: I would have to be the oldest head gardener in Oxford ever – which reminds me how much we are in debt to gardeners in the past who were never to see the saplings they planted grow into mature trees.

Magnolia

M. *grandiflora* 'Goliath'

To the left of the Hall steps are two magnolias with different flowering strategies. One, *Magnolia soulangeana*, is the classic spring-flowering magnolia seen in countless English gardens that throws out all its flowers in one great statement before the leaves appear; then all is over for the year, apart from the need to scrape petals off the path. In contrast is the *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Goliath' next to it. Not surprisingly, the sweetly scented flowers are large. Unlike its deciduous companion (from Japan), it is an evergreen from south USA, with glossy, leathery leaves and creamy-white flowers that it rations out over the summer – one or two at a time, just to keep us interested. Visitors probably ask about this tree more than any other.

All photos by Chris Munday @theoxfordgardener

Indian bean tree

Catalpa bignonioides 'Aurea'

Many trees can be appreciated by what they bring to a landscape or garden – a mound of green leaves comforting to the eye or their bare framework against a winter sunset. Not the catalpa. It is what I think of as 'event planting'. The young leaves when they break out in late spring may well be a fresh coppery yellow, but the main event is the exotic flower clusters that appear in midsummer. White flowers with purple veining and orange splashes leading into the heart of the flower are a real 'come hither' for every passing bee. In order for the flowers to be enjoyed up close I deliberately leave the lower branches at head height: this is not a tree to prune into a classic lollipop shape. Sadly it has been in decline for many years. It is about 120 years old and part of its framework has died back, but removing it would create an even more ungainly shape. After its efforts producing its flowers, the catalpa declines to come up with any autumn leaf colour – that would be asking too much.

Black mulberry

Morus nigra

It would be remiss of me to not mention the Balliol mulberry trees, of which there are five. Not only is the fruit a delicious summer treat but the trees have attractive heart-shaped leaves and a gnarled trunk that makes the trees look ancient. The story of how James I promoted the planting of mulberries in the early 17th century is well known. The initiative, intended to create a silk industry in England, was doomed to failure by bureaucratic mishandling: it is the leaves of the white mulberry that the silkworm thrives on, but only seeds and saplings of the black mulberry were distributed. We believe that one of our venerable trees was planted during this period, making it over 400 years old and easily the oldest tree in College. There is not, though, a great deal left of this tree, as most of it has perished and it clings on with the slimmest strand of bark on its trunk. In 1968 after an overnight storm the trunk split apart and it would have been removed except for the doggedness of the head gardener of the time, who persuaded College to grant a reprieve. Somehow it was pruned and lashed into shape so that over 50 years later we can admire its tenacity and dream of the silk underwear we all could be wearing. In recent years I have experimented with sowing seed from the fruit and I now have a small collection of saplings that could be the ready replacement, when the time comes.

Foxglove or Empress tree

Paulownia tomentosa

Looking at this tree's flowers, it is not difficult to see how it acquired the 'foxglove' common name when it was introduced into Europe from China in 1834. The tree was named in honour of the Grand Duchess Anna Paulowna (Pavlovna, 1795–1865), daughter of a Russian czar who married a Dutch king and was responsible for the setting up of hospitals and some fifty orphanages. Having a genus of tree named after you is a very effective way of keeping a life remembered.

The flowers appear before the leaves fully unfurl and stand out well amongst the branches. That a mature tree can produce 29 million seeds a year in the sticky, brown seed pods is a daunting prospect, but I can only assume that a large proportion are infertile or need very specific conditions to germinate – otherwise they would be popping up all over College, which they don't. Except for a couple of seedlings, that is, which appeared in the gap between the College wall and the tarmac path. Perhaps boosted by warm air wafting from the laundry in the basement, their growth rate was inspiring, and being curious gardeners we had to leave them 'just to see'. Which was 8–10ft stems in a season and leaves the size of dustbin lids – I'm sure the Grand Duchess would have been impressed. The Development Office were less so, as the leaves covered their windows, and when they were plunged into a green gloom we felt obliged to chop the seedlings down.

Sweet gum

Liquidambar styraciflua

Raking around the liquidambar on a bright autumn day as the pigments in the leaves are shifting from green to crimson and gold is a kaleidoscopic pleasure. Collecting leaves from around the College and storing them is a considerable task, but it is all part of observing the seasons. Being connected to the natural world in this way, I believe, contributes to emotional health, not just for weather-beaten gardeners but for many people. If College were planted mainly with evergreens instead of deciduous trees and shrubs the seasons would be less distinct and that would be … just dull.

All photos by Chris Munday @theoxfordgardener

‘Messing about with manuscripts’

The Library & Archives team explain how the work of R.A.B. Mynors helped reveal Balliol’s medieval manuscript collection

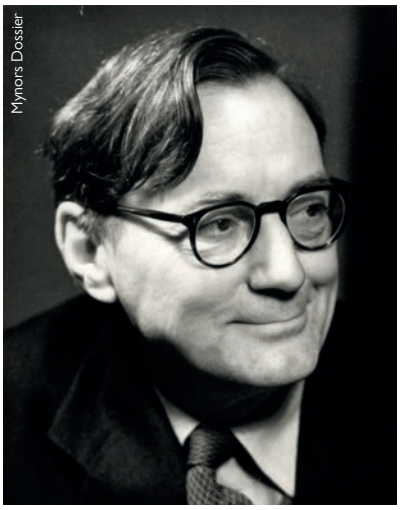
Sixty years ago, John Rowlands at Oxford University Press wrote plaintively to an author to ask if a manuscript he had taken away to revise would be returned soon.[1] The fruit of thirty years’ work, it was not published until three years later, in 1963. But when its long gestation was complete, R.A.B Mynors’ *Catalogue of Manuscripts of Balliol College, Oxford* would underline the importance of Balliol’s collection and illuminate the unique characteristics of each volume.

Mynors began his catalogue soon after he became a Tutorial Fellow in Classics at Balliol in 1927. He had arrived as an undergraduate five years earlier, holding a Domus Exhibition, and established a deep connection to the College. Immersing himself in its social life, he starred as Cassandra in a Balliol Players production of *Agamemnon*, debated with the Dervorguilla Society and rowed. He also enjoyed reading parties at the Chalet des Mélèzes in the French Alps, becoming friends with its owner, Francis Fortescue Urquhart (1890, Fellow 1896–1934), who bequeathed it to Mynors. For all this, Mynors’ studies didn’t suffer and he gained a first-class degree in 1926.

As a Fellow, Mynors was known for his exhilarating lectures and liked by his students, despite a certain shyness. Becoming College Librarian granted him access to Balliol’s manuscripts, which were an abiding interest, and by 1940 he had prepared a first draft of his catalogue.

Illustration of Christ in judgement from MS 384, a 15th-century book of hours, described by Mynors as ‘poor’ with ‘execrable’ border decoration.

'The fruit of thirty years' work, Mynors' *Catalogue* would illuminate the unique characteristics of each volume.'



R.A.B. Mynors, photographed by J.W. Thomas.

Initial from MS 6, a copy of St Augustine's Homilies (12th century), with a note by a later medieval reader at the bottom.

In 1944 he reluctantly left Oxford for Cambridge to take up the Kennedy Chair of Latin, becoming a Fellow at Pembroke. Although he was to describe this as 'the biggest mistake I ever made',[2] he stayed in Cambridge until 1953. Returning to Oxford he became Professor of Latin at Corpus Christi, only occasionally 'slipping anonymously' into Balliol, to catalogue stained glass.[3] Even so, when Balliol offered him an Honorary Fellowship in 1963 he accepted joyfully, remarking, 'My heart has always been, and will be, with the College to which I owe more than I can express.'[4]

Although all Mynors' academic posts were in Classics, he took a long view of Latin's place in Western culture. This was reflected in his work, which spanned a commentary on Virgil's *Georgics*, involvement in Oxford Medieval Texts and the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, and contribution to the Toronto translations of Erasmus. Continental medievalism formed a focus for his interest from early on, perhaps under the influence of his mentor M.R. James, Provost of Eton and author of ghost stories, whose catalogues of manuscripts in Cambridge colleges informed Mynors' later work. Mynors expressed these tensions after accepting the Jowett Fellowship at Balliol, noting the distraction of 'all this messing about with manuscripts'.[5] Notably he arranged 'to have the whole of the medieval library of Balliol sent over to Cambridge in relays'[6] so that he could finish work on his catalogue while teaching Classics there.

Why was Balliol's Library of such interest that it merited ferrying across the country? While many institutions possess manuscripts, these have often been brought together later. In contrast, most of Balliol's medieval books have been used by scholars at the College since the Middle Ages: the collection is a rare survival. Before the College statutes were issued in 1282, scholars had begun accruing books. The earliest recorded is a copy of Boethius' *De Musica* bequeathed by Peter de Cossington in 1276, and most early acquisitions were received as gifts. It is through Mynors' distillation of existing research on wills and his examination of the books themselves that we know this, as no contemporary registers survive. By the 15th century the number of donations required the construction of a new library, begun under the Mastership of Thomas Chace. This may have encouraged a significant donation of manuscripts by William Gray, Bishop of Ely, who came up to Balliol in 1431, when Chace's Library was nearing completion. A collector throughout his life, Gray left nearly two hundred books to Balliol. R.W. Hunt, one of Mynors' collaborators, described these as constituting 'by far the finest, as well as the largest, private collection to survive in England from the Middle Ages'.[7]

For Mynors, books were not simply texts. What fascinated him were the traces of intellectual history they bore in their marks of production, storage, ownership and reading. Balliol's Library, and particularly Gray's collection, gave insight into a whole world of intellectual networks and production. But they didn't give this information up readily. Inspired by the chained library at Hereford Cathedral, Mynors imagined the cataloguer as an interrogator, the manuscripts his victims. His scrutiny was profound and involved delving beneath a manuscript's appearance to uncover its past.

Thus his descriptions pay attention to scribes, who 'were not anonymous symbols at the foot of the page but human beings and friends'.[8] He charts the career of one Dutch scribe in particular, Theodoricus Werken, who contributed to the copying of Domenico Bandini's enormous encyclopaedia for William Gray (MS 238). Not only does Mynors marvel that an exemplar of this work was available in Germany, as it was 'rare even in Italy', but he also pinpoints the moment when Werken crossed the Alps in Gray's entourage, noting changes in ink, script and manuscript structure and layout as marking a transition from German to Italian bookmaking practices. Such stories speak to the internationalism of medieval Europe.[9]

Mynors was equally attuned to readers such as Alexander Bell, a Balliol Fellow who listed his books in manuscript 234, together with notes on their loan to other scholars, thus enabling the reconstruction of medieval reading habits. Mynors describes Bell's list as 'dull', for lacking any new humanist titles.[10] The same volume also demonstrates the economic


Stuart Bebb

Year 12 students taking part in Balliol's Floreat Access Programme meet Mynors' catalogue and some of Balliol's manuscripts.

use of books, with inscriptions showing it had been pawned.

Even items that seem generic are described fully, such as MS 384, a decorated book of hours of which Mynors says: 'the pictures are poor, and their borders execrable'.[11] He still lists the illustrations and examines the calendar, annotated with the deaths of its owners. He notes that the book spent two centuries hidden in a thatched roof – possibly evidence of a 16th-century Catholic owner trying to protect it.[12]

Much has changed since Mynors' catalogue was published. In many ways his work has weathered well and it is still the main gateway to Balliol's manuscripts. In the last 60 years, however, more research has been undertaken, particularly on books that were outside Mynors' expertise and interest, the non-European and modern manuscripts. The use of Balliol's collections has changed, with increasing focus on outreach, learning and inspiration to students, schools and the public, and the Latinate character of his catalogue presents barriers to these audiences. Mynors considered a 'composite' catalogue of Oxford manuscripts, and this is beginning to be realised online as *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*. It is our ambition to find funding for the augmentation, digitisation and mark-up of Mynors' landmark work so that it can continue to be a key pillar in the 'great undertaking'[13] that is the discovery of Balliol's manuscripts.

Based on the exhibition and catalogue by Stewart Tiley and Naomi Tiley (Librarians) and Bethany Hamblen (Archivist and Records Manager), available at tinyurl.com/4hf9akzm.

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[1] Letter from John Rowlands, Oxford University Press, to R.A.B. Mynors, 30 December 1960, Mynors Papers.
[2] Letter from R.A.B. Mynors to Master Kenny, 2 October 1982, Mynors dossier.
[3] Winterbottom, M., 'Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors 1903–1989', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 80 (1993), p. 388.
[4] Letter from R.A.B. Mynors to Master Keir, 4 June 1963, Mynors dossier.
[5] Winterbottom, 'Mynors', p. 382.
[6] Hayter, Alethea, ed., *A Wise Woman: A Memoir of Lavinia Mynors from her Diaries and Letters* (Erskine Press: Banham, 1996), p. 72.
[7] H.E. Salter and Mary D. Lobel (eds), *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 3, the University of Oxford* (Oxford University Press for the University of London, Institute of Historical Research: London, 1954), p. 82.
[8] R.G.M. Nisbet, 'Sir Roger Mynors', *Gnomon*, 62 (1990), pp. 574–575.
[9] Mynors, R.A.B., 'A Fifteenth-century scribe: T. Werken', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1950), accessed 1/7/2020: http://www.jstor.com/stable/41337256, pp. 97–104, p. 99.
[10] Mynors, R.A.B., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963), pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.
[11] Ibid. p. 361.
[12] Ibid. p. 362.
[13] Ibid. p. liii.

The Fighting Man

Balliol Library's virtual ghost story evening reminded John Whiston (1977) of a spooky experience he had as a student

Only two ballots really matter in Britain: the General Election and the Balliol room ballot. Yes, an Oxford education is about being taught by world-leading academics, engaging in discourse with like-minded contemporaries, expanding wide your intellectual frame of reference. But it's also about getting a good room. And by good, I mean old. One of those rooms with gothic windows set in honeyed stonework, with double oak doors, a room that reeks of wood polish and whisky, a room that reeks of history.

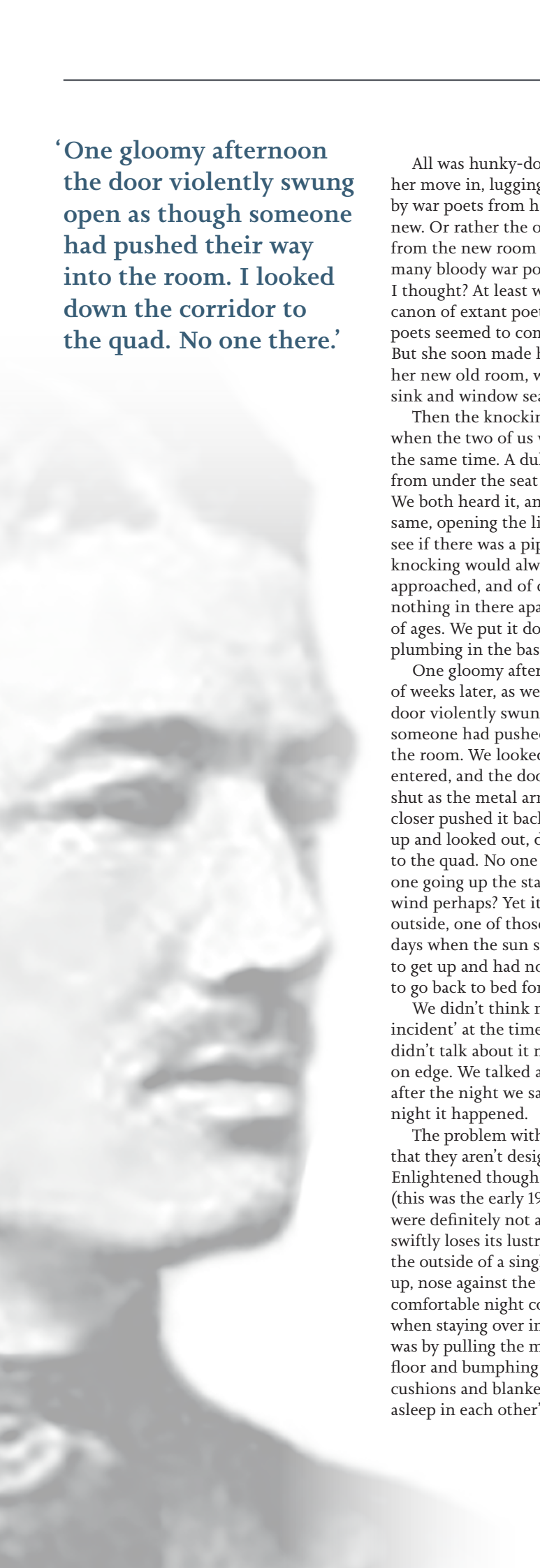
My girlfriend hadn't been that lucky in the ballot that year. She'd got one of those rooms in the block beside the Hall. True, it had a wonderful view of the quad, high enough up to make out friends sitting on the lawns and study the form of the people playing bowls. And great for timing a last-minute dash to Hall before the end of breakfast. But it wasn't old. It wasn't what Oxford was in the books and films we all pretend not to read or watch before coming up. Ah well.

So it was with real excitement that I grabbed her in the Library at the end of Michaelmas Term and pulled her outside into the passage between the two quads. In my hand was a postcard I had (illegally) ripped from the JCR noticeboard asking if anyone wanted to swap a new room for an old one on the ground floor, Back Quad – prime real estate. She met the guy later that day and the deal was done. Apparently he was a rower, got up ridiculously early and liked lots of sleep, so the ground-floor room he had was too noisy at night for him. Idiot.

'Then the knocking started. A dull thumping noise from under the seat by the window.'

Piers Nye

‘One gloomy afternoon the door violently swung open as though someone had pushed their way into the room. I looked down the corridor to the quad. No one there.’



All was hunky-dory. I even helped her move in, lugging boxes of books by war poets from her old room to her new. Or rather the other way round, from the new room to the old. How many bloody war poets were there, I thought? At least with Classics the canon of extant poetry is finite. War poets seemed to come by the boxload. But she soon made herself at home in her new old room, with its en-suite sink and window seat.

Then the knocking started. Never when the two of us were in the room at the same time. A dull thumping noise from under the seat by the window. We both heard it, and both did the same, opening the lid of the seat to see if there was a pipe rattling. The knocking would always stop when you approached, and of course there was nothing in there apart from the dust of ages. We put it down to the ancient plumbing in the basement underneath.

One gloomy afternoon a couple of weeks later, as we sat reading, the door violently swung open as though someone had pushed their way into the room. We looked up. Nothing entered, and the door slowly swung shut as the metal arms of the door closer pushed it back into line. I got up and looked out, down the corridor to the quad. No one there. And no one going up the stairs. A gust of wind perhaps? Yet it was perfectly still outside, one of those moisty winter days when the sun seemed too lazy to get up and had now decided just to go back to bed for the night.

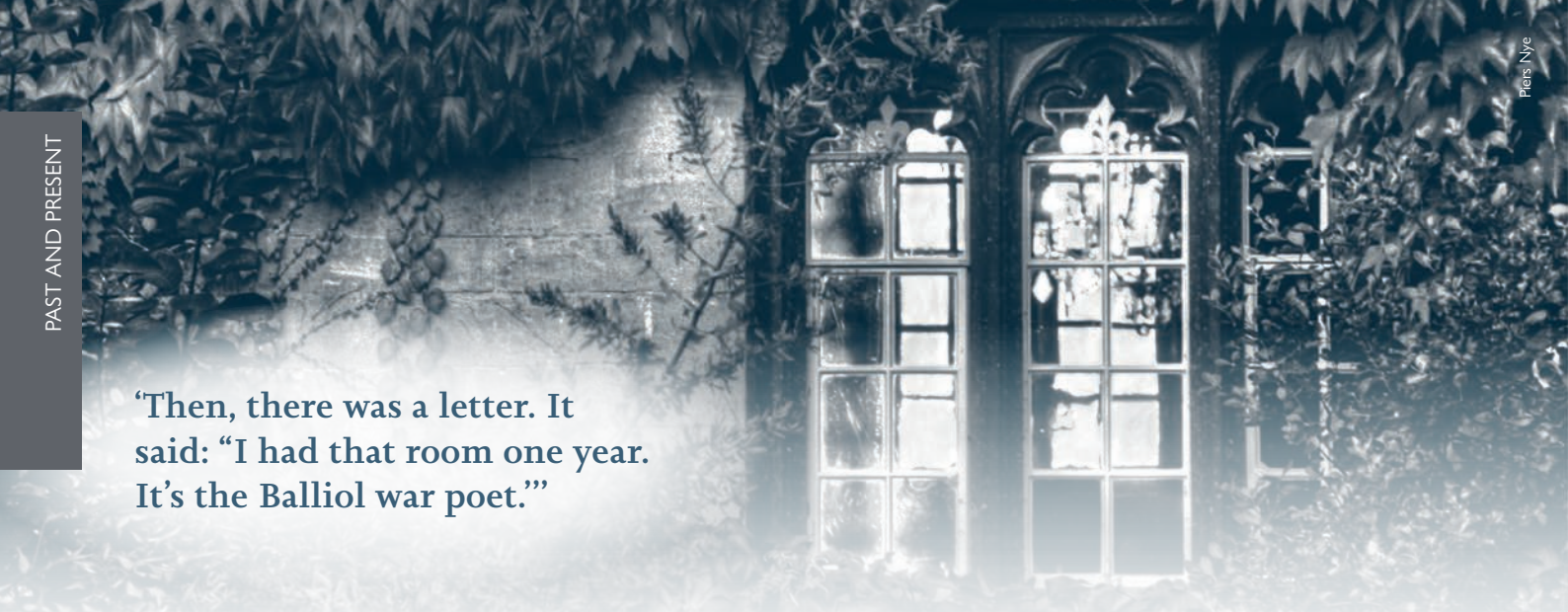
We didn’t think much of ‘the door incident’ at the time. Or at least we didn’t talk about it much. But it put us on edge. We talked a lot more about it after the night we saw what we saw, the night it happened.

The problem with Balliol rooms is that they aren’t designed for couples. Enlightened though the College was (this was the early 1980s), double beds were definitely not a feature. Love swiftly loses its lustre when clinging to the outside of a single bed or squished up, nose against the wall. The only way a comfortable night could be guaranteed when staying over in someone’s room was by pulling the mattress on to the floor and bumphing up the side with cushions and blankets. So there we lay, asleep in each other’s arms … when it happened. We both woke up at the same time. No sound had woken us. But I could feel the tension in our bodies immediately. I could feel our hands dig into each other’s.

Standing at the bottom of our bed was a man. Or rather, the projection of a man. He looked beyond and over us. Not surprising, as we were lying on the floor. Then, after a silent while, he started to glide over us towards the wall behind our heads. We gripped each other tightly. It lasted a few seconds and then it was over. We lay in silence for a minute or two, maybe fearful he would come back. Or that speaking would jinx whatever it was away for ever. Then we started chatting nervously. Did you see what I just saw? OK, describe him to me. Wavy, curly hair. Yes. Moustache. Worsted tweed suit with a waistcoat. Yes. Watch chain in his waistcoat pocket. Good-looking. Yes. Chiselled. Haughty. Yes, yes, yes.

We had both seen what we had seen and we had seen the same. But the thing that chilled us most, and still chills me 40 years later, was that he emitted his own light. The room was entirely dark, the window covered with a thick curtain. Yet we saw him clear as day, at least a slightly misty day. The word we used that night was ‘emanate’. He emanated his own light. Why was that somehow worse than if a shaft of light had cracked through between the curtains and illuminated something? Perhaps that way it would have been light finding something left over from life, something corporeal. That way it would have been obeying at least some of the laws of physics. Whereas our figure came from so far beyond that nothing of flesh was left. He brought with him his own luminescence, his own way of being seen. And to us that made him even more horribly powerful.

‘Standing at the bottom of our bed was a man. He looked beyond and over us. Then, after a silent while, he started to glide over us towards the wall behind our heads.’



Piers Nye

'Then, there was a letter. It said: "I had that room one year. It's the Balliol war poet."'

We debated this endlessly the next morning, safely over hot chocolate in the café in the market. Hot chocolate is the only drink you can drink the day after you've seen a ghost. Even saying the word 'ghost' made us giggle. It seemed so silly and so Halloween-ey for what had been a genuinely shocking experience. We talked about the knocking. We talked about 'the door incident'. Then we went to a well-lit bit of the Bod to get on with all the being-a-student stuff.

As we told our friends about the incident, rumours about that staircase started to drift back. Nothing concrete. Just 'Yes, we've heard that staircase is a bit funny.' Out of a surfeit of curiosity, it was decided to put something about the experience in a College magazine asking if anyone else had experienced any happenings on that staircase. The usual stuff came in: stuff about the leaky gas fires leading to unexplained student deaths in the '20s and '30s. Cars backfiring on Broad Street and wags quipping 'There goes another Balliol man.'

There was one strange letter from an American who had had that same room. He was woken one morning to the sound of his door being broken down and his scout and a policeman standing looking at him concernedly as he lay in bed. He'd left a note on his door saying 'Don't come in, I'm dead' and then locked the latch in order to enjoy a lie-in after a long night out. 'Dead beat! I meant, Dead beat,' he explained to the scout, who nevertheless looked oddly at him and muttered something like 'It's happened to me before' as he slunk out. Something and nothing, we decided.

Then, a month later, there was another letter. It very simply said: 'I had that room one year. It's the Balliol war poet.'

We were nervous when we made our way to the Balliol Library. Even more nervous when we asked if the Library had anything by 'the Balliol war poet'. And not because it was such a stupid question, like asking a greengrocer if they stock apples. A leather-bound book, an anthology, was swiftly but carefully produced. We sat down at a table and opened it. A few pages in, there was a photograph. Through the translucent paper covering the plate, you could make out a figure. The thin tissue trembled as we turned it over. And there he was. The man who had stood at the end of our mattress, arrogant and defiant. Leaping out of the book, leaping across the decades, freezing our souls with the dreadful impossibility of it all. Julian Grenfell (1906), the Balliol war poet.

We looked at each other and looked back at the book for a while, before closing it and distractedly climbing down the stone stairs and into the tall gloom of the Front Quad. Students in scarves and duffel coats hurried back and forth. We felt for each other's hands and walked silently out towards the life, bustle and safety of Broad Street.

That evening, we sought out the rower to ask why he had really swapped rooms. The more we'd thought about it the less it made sense that anyone would swap a beautiful old Balliol room for a modern box. He stuck to his story – late-night noise in the quad – but we could tell he was lying. He stuttered and stumbled. Rowers never do that. Crucially, he didn't once ask us why we were asking. He knew. We all three knew.

And now you know too.

Born in 1888, the Hon Julian Grenfell, soldier and boxer, wrote about the glory of war. He died at the Front on 26 May 1915. His best-known poem, 'Into Battle', was published in *The Times* on 28 May 2015, the same day his death notice appeared in the paper.

Julian Grenfell, from the Balliol College War Memorial Book.

Julian Grenfell's name on the war memorials in the Chapel Passage.

Balliol Library would be delighted to receive ghost stories from Balliol members past and present for its next ghost story reading for Halloween. If you would like to submit a story, please contact library@ox.ac.uk.

Mark Cummins, holding Pointy, with Pointy co-founder Charles Bibby.

Transforming local retail

Mark Cummins (2001) explains how he created Pointy, a startup recently acquired by Google

Pointy was a very simple idea: if you are looking for a particular product, Pointy will show you which nearby shops currently have it in stock.

It always seemed strange to me that you could search the whole internet in half a second, but if you wanted to know whether your local shop had a product in stock, you still had to call them or go there in person. The reason for this situation is that retailers maintain their inventory records in thousands of different ways, and often in systems not connected to the internet, so there is no easy way to collect the data together.

Local retail is still by far the dominant way that people buy things. E-commerce gets all the media attention, but traditional retail is much bigger. So a solution to the problem could have a significant impact. This got me thinking about a technical solution that might make the problem tractable.

At Oxford I had read for a DPhil in Engineering Science, working in computer vision and robotics. My DPhil research was on robot navigation, supervised by Paul Newman (Balliol 1991). During that time I met Charles Bibby (Worcester, 2000), a fellow DPhil student who would become my co-founder at Pointy. Neither of us knew anything about retail, but we knew something about the technical problems that needed to be solved, and worked out the rest as we went along.

We ended up developing a small electronic device that attaches to the retailer's point of sale system and collects the necessary information in a uniform way. We went to quite extreme lengths to make the system truly universal and simple to use. The end result was something that took a few minutes to set up and could be used by any retailer, no matter what existing equipment they had. The Pointy service then published the inventory data online via search engines such as Google, so that shoppers could easily find nearby stores that had the product they want available.

Charles and I established our company in Dublin in 2014. Within a few months we had some rough prototypes, and started to pilot the system with local retailers. It was enough to convince investors, and raise some money to scale up the company. Over the next five years we raised $20m of venture capital and grew the company to just under a hundred people. Our main market became the US; within a few years small retailers everywhere from Hawaii to Alaska were using the system.

Building the company was an interesting journey: it stretched me in different ways to academic work. A start-up is a very intense rollercoaster ride, but also extremely fulfilling. The thing I ultimately enjoyed the most was building the team, and watching them do things together that none could have done alone.

In January 2020 Pointy became part of Google. We'd been working with Google from early on, because search was an important part of our business. When they approached us with an acquisition offer, it was a natural fit. Our core focus remains the same, but we have gained all the benefits of Google's reach and scale.

Shortly after the acquisition closed, Covid-19 struck and turned the world upside down. For local retailers, an online presence suddenly became even more important. It reinforced for us that we were doing something that really mattered to small businesses everywhere. Now, with recovery on the horizon, we hope we can be part of the way local businesses bounce back. We've still got a very long way to go to finish the journey we started.

Legally speaking

Professor Sarah Green (1995), Commissioner for Commercial and Common Law at the Law Commission, speaks to Katie Bacon (2019) about topics arising from a talk she gave to the Younger Society

KB: At the Younger Society's Michaelmas event, you told us about your time at Balliol. Could you tell us about your journey to Balliol?

SG: I knew nothing about Balliol, or indeed any college, but a friend had recently got a place at Oriel to study Law. He enjoyed it and told me I should give it a go, and he advised me to visit a few colleges to see which one felt right. I applied for an Open Day place at Balliol simply because it was the first in the prospectus. and the evening I arrived, I realised it felt 'right'. I attended one other college Open Day, but it didn't have the same inviting effect on me!

I went to a state school in the West Midlands, which I loved, but it didn't have a huge amount of know-how then about Oxbridge admissions. My teachers were amazing, though, in finding out what they could about what I needed to do – this was back in the days when there was an entrance exam as well as an interview. I did the English, Critical Analysis and General papers. I remember I got to write about Keats and Shakespeare, and I have always been very unusual in that I enjoy exams anyway, so it sticks in my mind as a highly enjoyable (although totally mysterious) adventure.

I kept this experience at the front of my mind much later when I became a member of the Law Faculty at Bristol University as a Fellow and took on the role of Admissions Director. I tried to demystify the process, and to make it as positive an experience as these things can be, whatever the outcome.

KB: In your career you have seen many different sides of the legal profession. How do they differ and what have you enjoyed most about each?

SG: I love the way lawyers think, regardless of the particular context in which they are working. What has always fascinated me is the way that lawyers 'discuss issues' with each other, whether in a professional context or not. Lawyers think nothing of having highly spirited discussions with one another whilst remaining on very good personal terms, in a way which I think looks surprising and/or amusing to those

'It amazes me how, even today, I will be asked a question and, in answering it, dredge up something I learnt for a lecture or tutorial a decade and a half ago.'

Professor Sarah Green

'If there is a silver lining to the destruction wrought by the pandemic I think it will be a realisation that alternative platforms and formats can assist in improving access to justice.'

unused to such interactions. I don't mean to suggest that non-lawyers don't or can't do this – just that I think lawyers take a particular pleasure in it!

I suppose the most notable contrast to me is between academic lawyers and practising lawyers. Unsurprisingly, practitioners want to find solutions that work, whereas many (although I should stress not all) academic lawyers are concerned more with conceptual coherence and elegance. They work well together, and I think there is unquestionably a place for both in the world.

KB: You advised students not to worry about finding their dream career straight away. Does your range of experience help you in your role as a Law Commissioner?

SG: The only plans I ever had in life were to be an actress or a guide dog trainer, so this was not ex ante my dream job, although it has turned out to be very close to that. I followed my nose at each crossroads and took care, so far as I could, not to burn any bridges or close any doors. I suppose my career progression has been a meander more than anything else. I am lucky in that I have always had a clear idea of what I enjoy doing, and that has always been more important to me than money, prestige or external expectation – I realised early on in life that I was going to have to spend so much of my time in 'work' that it made sense to love what I did.

My first job was as a software developer and coder at Accenture. I knew fairly quickly that this wasn't a job for life for me, but it taught me an enormous amount – about work, about coding, about 'real life' after university – and I will always be grateful for it.

Then I spent 18 years teaching and writing about Law. It amazes me how, even today, I will be asked a question and, in answering it, dredge up something I learnt for a lecture or tutorial a decade and a half ago! Being a commercial lawyer, I taught across a wide range of subjects and this was sometimes exhausting – there were times when I would teach, say, crime, tort, agency, contract and medical law all in one day. Many of my colleagues were far more specialised, and sometimes I thought I had taken an ill-advised route. Now, though, I am delighted I did it that way because, as a Law Commissioner, that breadth of knowledge is invaluable.

KB: Much of your work examines law and technology, and you told us that you were writing about 'smart contracts' before they were seen in practice. Can you predict any new development that we may see soon?

SG: Quantum computing is the one to watch. In terms of mainstream use, it is still on the horizon, but it is coming, and its effects on almost all of our lives will be seismic. The computational security that we all currently take for granted, for example, will have to be transformed.

KB: Do you think law degrees will look different as a result of changes in technology?

SG: I hope to see at least the addition of modules or papers on coding, or on the logical architecture of machines. I think a basic understanding of algorithms will, in the future, be an essential part of most lawyers' toolkits. Law has always been about the regulation and incentivisation of human behaviour and it is inauthentic to pretend that humans are still making all the decisions in the world, or performing all legally relevant actions. I should emphasise, however, that this is in my mind very much an addition to, rather than a substitution for, conventional legal subjects and analysis, which I think remain as pertinent as ever. The robots are not taking over, but they are here to join in.

KB: During the event there was discussion about how criminal law has adjusted existing legal concepts/ doctrines to include developments in technology. Media discussion has also observed that civil courts are more suited to using technology to run trials than are criminal courts. Do you think technology will help reduce the backlog of cases in the criminal courts?

SG: If there is a silver lining to the destruction wrought by the pandemic (and we can only hope there are several), I think it will be a realisation that alternative platforms and formats can assist in improving access to justice generally. There are understandable and sensible concerns over precisely how this can work, but that is true of all change, and is not a reason to shy away from it. There has been a gradual realisation that technology can be made to be a safe and effective alternative to physical courtrooms in some circumstances, and I think this would have taken decades longer to achieve in the absence of the exigencies of the current time.

KB: The year 2020 was a tumultuous one, to say the least. What are you most looking forward to in 2021?

SG: People regaining a sense of physical safety and financial security, and the opportunity to start rebuilding those things that we as a society can. And, like many people I'm sure, going out for dinner!

Suitcase studios

Charles Randall (1975) describes his work developing portable radio stations for emergencies

In March 2019, one of the worst tropical cyclones, Cyclone Idai, made landfall at Beira on the coast of Mozambique. It killed over 1,000 people, caused massive flooding and destruction, and left behind a humanitarian crisis, with two and a half million needing assistance. Radio stations in the region had been destroyed or taken off air by the storm, which impeded communication with those affected. Soon after, I received a phone call asking how quickly I could produce a portable radio studio.

Three days later, a team of two trainers flew to Beira, via a roundabout route, carrying an entire FM radio station as personal baggage – including our demonstration studio. On arrival, the trainers recruited a team of local broadcasters from their old contacts. Two of these broadcasters and the equipment were flown by UN helicopter into Buzi, one of the worst-affected areas, which was inaccessible by road. Within an hour they were on air, initially with an open-air studio and then later moving into the shell of an abandoned building.

'In a disaster area: it is crucial to establish good communications with those affected as early as possible.'

This emergency radio station continued broadcasting relief information, coordinating with the UN cluster groups responsible for different aspects of disaster relief, health messages, information to reunite divided families, and music and programmes to lift spirits and encourage a return to a sense of normality and control. A number of solar-powered/wind-up radios were distributed to key locations, but since most mobile phones also have an FM receiver, many of the population were able to hear the programmes.

The Covid crisis has shown us the importance of reliable and trusted sources of information; where these are lacking, misinformation is rife, and fear and instability spread. The same is true in a disaster area: it is crucial to establish good communications with those affected as early as possible. There is evidence that if emergency radio stations are established in a disaster area within 72 hours, lives will be saved. Not only do disasters have an impact on the physical health of those affected: they also harm mental health. A study in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan showed that listening to emergency radio strongly correlated with better mental health outcomes.

I have spent the last ten years developing radio studios built into suitcases. These are used by specialist disaster response agencies such as First Response Radio as well as the UN and some major broadcasters.

My involvement with audio began on my first Sunday in Oxford. I was in St Aldate's Church, when they asked for volunteers for the sound system. It was like falling in love: I knew at that moment that it was for me. I fairly quickly found myself running the sound system at St Aldate's Church and then at the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (OICCU). In those days, the systems were quite limited,

Radio presenters using a suitcase studio indoors in Buzi, Mozambique, after Cyclone Idai.

but we were beginning to experiment with more ambitious events which used a lot of borrowed equipment. This had to be carried from event to event. With my reel-to-reel tape deck in hand and backpack loaded with mic stands threaded with cable drums, I became very aware of ergonomics – and weight!

In my third year I took a year out, mainly because of a broken heart as well as some health issues combined with a crisis of faith. It was a very painful time, but in due course I came through it. I was very fortunate to get a temporary job in a Cambridge consultancy, working with one of the world's foremost audio designers (this job later became permanent). We worked with some of the most sophisticated audio technology as well as the most basic. We developed the world's most advanced (and expensive!) studio mixer, but we also ran the Cambridge Radio Course for Christian radio producers from around the world, many of whom came from very basic set-ups in the developing world. This was an intensive course of both theory and practice. We would take over part of a Cambridge college for a month in summer, setting up transportable radio studios.

I spent six years with the Cambridge team, but I knew that if I were to continue in the training role I needed experience working in the same environment as our students from the developing world. After further study I joined Feba Radio and spent 25 years with them.

Feba is an international Christian radio group that works in many Asian and African countries, supporting national believers making radio programmes in their own countries, many in difficult or hazardous situations. I travelled extensively as a studio and audio consultant, beginning with a year in Beirut shortly after our studio had been destroyed in the fighting there. I built a replacement studio, but it was clear that the equipment had to be made transportable so that it could be easily relocated if the fighting came too close.

As I continued travelling, seeing the impact of man-made disasters, including refugee camps, I found that there were many situations where a quickly deployable portable system was needed. A portable system could be used to get new stations on air, after which it could be redeployed for training, outside broadcasts or emergency use.

An open-air radio station in Buzi after the cyclone with the Ranger 4 studio.

Many of the countries we worked in are prone to natural disasters, so a number of my colleagues were developing the concept of rapid response radio, where broadcasts to disaster-affected communities would be an integral part of the overall emergency response. This work led to the development of the radio studio or station in suitcases. Following a restructuring, I later acquired the rights to the design and developed it further into the current Ranger 4 studio, which is optimised for Disaster Radio.

I am often asked how quickly we can supply equipment after a disaster. Most people who ask never deploy into a disaster area. Effective response needs training and equipping before a disaster happens. An organisation must have a good relationship with the UN agencies which coordinate the response, and developing such relationships needs time. The Mozambique deployment was the exception to the rule. It was led by Health Communication Resources UK (HCR) and First Response Radio, both run by former colleagues with unparalleled experience in disaster radio, who were able to work with an existing network of contacts in Mozambique.

First-response radio teams have been set up in a number of Asian countries where natural disasters are common. There are plans to establish response teams in Africa as well. However, the Covid crisis has disrupted these plans. Unfortunately, natural disasters don't go away; in fact they seem to be increasing in frequency, in part because of climate change. It is my hope, regardless of who supplies equipment, that more teams can be trained and equipped in disaster-prone areas and that radio is integrated into disaster planning.

Then there are the camps for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), which vary from the size of a small village to a city of millions. There are often tensions due to rumours and unreliable information which would be alleviated if radio were integrated into their organisation.

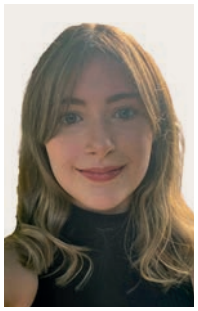
While the company has not grown the way I might have hoped, it is satisfying to know that its work is saving lives and contributing to the wellbeing of many of those unfortunate enough to be caught up in disasters.

'It is my hope that more teams can be trained and equipped in disaster-prone areas and that radio is integrated into disaster planning.'

The future of the EU's relationships with the US and the UK

PPE undergraduate Amelia Wood (2019) talks to former US Ambassador to the EU Anthony Gardner (1985)


Anthony Gardner


Amelia Wood

The past ten years have seen the European Union face the most significant challenges since its inception. The lingering after-effects of the 2008 financial crisis meant that the decade began with a debt crisis across the continent. The middle years then forced the bloc to grapple with a migrant crisis that deeply divided member states, in addition to numerous acts of terrorism. The year 2016 brought with it two more threats to the European project: Brexit, with one of its biggest cheerleaders being elected President of the United States. Despite this, and as the EU deals with a global pandemic, it appears to be not only still in one piece but also more united than ever before. With this in mind I was interested to speak with Anthony Gardner, former US ambassador to the EU, about his career and his thoughts on the EU's future relationships with the US and the UK.

Before arriving to study an MPhil in International Relations at Balliol in 1985, Anthony had already graduated from Harvard University with a BA in Government. He remembers Balliol fondly, though it proved a radical change from his time at Harvard. Upon receipt of a 15-page, single-spaced list of books, for example, he asked which ones were most relevant for his course. The response of 'Well, here, unlike Harvard, we don't spoon-feed our students – you're supposed to read them all and figure out which ones for yourself!' came as quite a shock. And after Anthony took the comment 'You might want to rethink this' from his thesis advisor Professor Sir Michael Howard as a purely optional invitation, a friend had to elucidate for him the nuances of British understatement, explaining that his advisor was in fact telling him to rewrite the whole thing.

It was another Oxford Professor, Loukas Tsoukalis, who sparked in Anthony a lifelong interest in the European Union. After leaving Balliol, he completed a JD in Law at Columbia Law School, taking several modules in European law. A professor there recommended that he apply for an internship with the Directorate General for Competition Policy at the European Commission and he did so successfully. His positive experience in Brussels made him want to stay. He worked there as an associate at an international law firm, later moving on to firms in New York and Paris. His time in the legal profession was interspersed with diplomatic work. Between 1994 and 1995, he served as Director for European Affairs for the National Security Council in Washington.

At the turn of the millennium, Anthony took another change of direction. He began a career in finance, acquiring a Master's degree in the subject from the London Business School. He worked for several financial

'It is vital that the two superpowers continue to work in conjunction with one another. "Even if we can't be aligned on all these issues, we should at least diminish points of divergence,'" he says; if we don't, China would be more than happy to fill the gap.'

firms, including six years as managing director of Palamon Capital Partners, a London-based private equity firm. But his interest in working in and with the EU had not faded. During President Obama's second term in office, his wide-ranging expertise led him to being appointed as the US ambassador to the EU in 2014.

Reflecting on his time as ambassador, Anthony says that he is most proud of spearheading landmark data privacy reform which many thought would never pass Congress, let alone with the substantial majority it achieved. The legislation meant that online data could continue to pass freely between the US and the EU, while affording EU citizens far greater rights to protect their data before US courts.

But for Anthony, data protection is just one area of many where the mutual benefits of cooperation are obvious. He outlines others, including security and humanitarianism, in his book *Stars with Stripes* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), in which he discusses the 'essential partnership' between Europe and the United States. Hence, Anthony maintains, it is vital that the two superpowers continue to work in conjunction with one another. 'Even if we can't be aligned on all these issues, we should at least diminish points of divergence,' he says; if we don't, China would be more than happy to fill the gap, setting its own norms and standards, as it is already attempting to do for innovations such as facial recognition and video surveillance.

A line in his book describes his confidence in the US–EU relationship on the principle that 'on the big issues, the views of the US and the EU converge far more than they diverge' – but would this always be the case going forward, I asked? He acknowledges that the coming decades may see Europe assert its own distinct policy agenda. However, his Italian heritage means he doesn't see that necessarily as a bad thing. 'I also feel Europe should be more self-sufficient; it is the only thing that corresponds with the richness of Europe's history and aspirations. It should be able to stand up on its own two feet more often, and if that comes at the cost of disagreeing with the US more often, so be it.' Going forward, he maintains the defining issue nations will have to grapple with is whether, in the words of Martin Wolff, they believe in 'bridges down or bridges up'. The more the US and the EU can minimise their divergences and work together on common challenges like climate change, or even the pandemic, the better.

The same idea ran through our discussion of Brexit. While in his book Anthony bluntly calls the UK's decision 'one of the greatest acts of self-harm taken by a country', in conversation he is more introspective: 'It was a decision taken by a sovereign democratic county that deserves respect, and there's no desire from the incoming [Biden] team to reopen that issue.' He seems keener to look for ways in which the UK could be a potential partner to the US on issues it has already championed such as climate change, multilateralism, and human rights.

This theme of bridges down reminded me how the EU had navigated the numerous challenges it had faced over the past ten years:

'He seems keener to look for ways in which the UK could be a potential partner to the US on issues it has already championed such as climate change, multilateralism, and human rights.'

by championing interconnectedness above all else, even when the urge was to retreat behind national borders. Yet the decade has also seen many other countries or leaders conclude that the opposite was necessary. Donald Trump voicing an 'America first' policy agenda all the way to the White House was one of them.

After leaving his ambassadorial post in early 2017 following Trump's election as President, Anthony struggled to watch from the sidelines as his work was dismantled. 'It was like a four-year tooth extraction,' he recalls. He felt the Trump administration and in particular his successor as EU ambassador sought to destroy the US–EU relationship for seemingly no end. This damage, as well as that to the US's many other diplomatic ties, he thinks will be difficult to repair. 'It is going to be very hard for us to go around preaching about democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, and climate change – who is going to believe us now?'

The experience led Anthony to jump back into politics and – despite promising his wife that he would never join another political campaign – join the Biden campaign for President. While Biden succeeded, Anthony admits that his success does not spell the defeat of Trumpism. Although partly economic, he puts the cause of the popularity of Trump and those like him mainly down to division and unease that are largely cultural – a phenomenon being experienced across the Atlantic as well. While Trump's alleged remedies have largely worsened these issues, Anthony remains positive that Biden can and will address them in office.

During our conversation, Anthony remarked on the great luxury of being able to study at Oxford and of being surrounded by smart, ambitious people. Having spoken with him and reflected on his varied and impactful career, I am confident his peers would say very much the same in relation to him.

Spreading Balliol's values

Professor Edward Dommen (1957) recalls sharing the ideals of PPE in new universities around the world

Balliol

Politics, philosophy and economics make a judicious combination. The connections between politics and economics are evident and fruitful. In the late 1950s on the other hand, Oxford philosophy had wandered into sterile country. By good fortune, R.M. Hare (1937, Tutorial Fellow 1947–1966), author of *The Language of Morals* (1952), who taught philosophy in Greats, invited me to a reading party. The discussions restored my faith in philosophy and gave me the basic tools of ethics which have served me ever since. The encounter also underlined the value of well-articulated excursions beyond the boundaries of a set curriculum.

Balliol by the sea

When I came down from Balliol in 1960, the University of Sussex was just being established, under the leadership of John Fulton (1923, Fellow 1928–1947). He had read Greats at Balliol, where he shortly became a philosophy don. 'His title was changed to "politics" in 1935,' says Wikipedia. Had he changed discipline or had the stem blossomed into two blooms? In any event, here were shades of the interdisciplinary Sussex to come.

Fulton's explicit ambition was to create a 'Balliol by the sea'. He set about recruiting young Balliol graduates to staff the new university. I was one of them. The aim was not to reproduce PPE but to cultivate the soil in which it was rooted: to foster a questioning mind, to encourage exploration and intellectual daring. The dialectical spirit of Balliol's tutorial method was a key tool.

The author: how we work today.

As to curriculum, we discussed the model another new university, Keele, had chosen, a menu from which one could choose any assortment of dishes. We preferred coherent combinations like PPE.

Another aspect of Balliol by the sea: Oxford in my day was still largely male, and there was a frustrated demand for places for women. As a result, several of our first students at Sussex were sisters of our Balliol contemporaries.

Two vignettes of the Balliol approach. Shortly after I started, a colleague and I were asked to interview a freshman who had come to study chemistry but said he wanted to change to economics. He explained that his school deemed him suited to science and that is what his parents wanted, but not he. His file revealed that he wrote poetry at school and that it had won prizes. We explained that he had been admitted to the university, not to a particular course, and he was free to choose the course he wanted. Delighted, he switched to English.

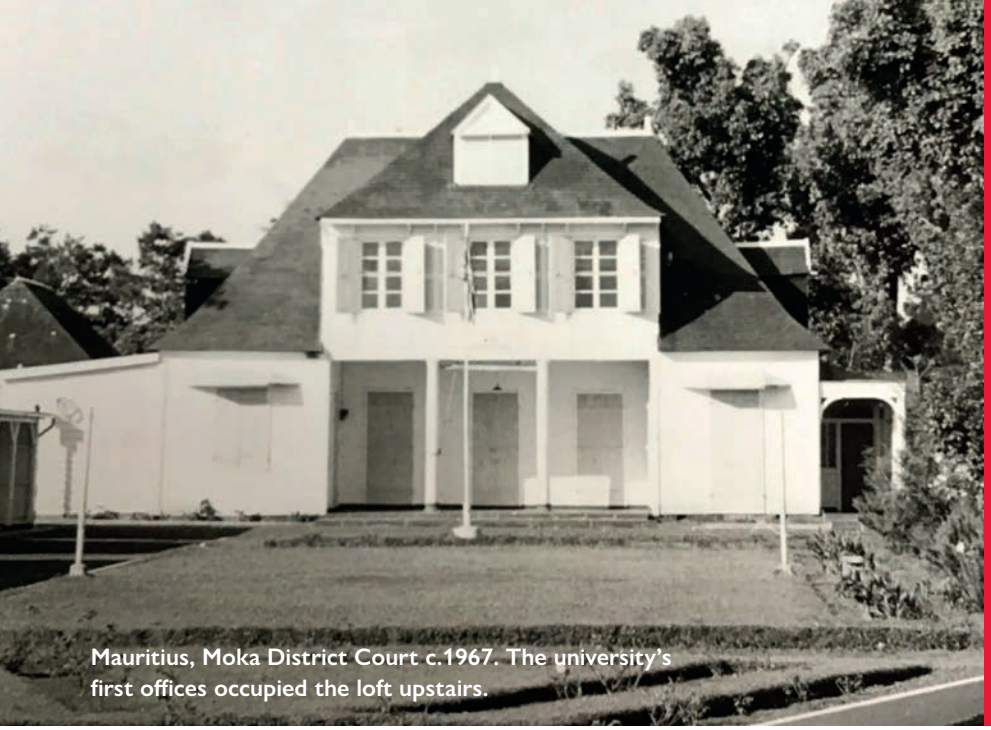
Another student asked if he could have a course on conflict resolution. With the tutorial method, large numbers weren't needed to justify a course, so I volunteered to teach him one I called 'The role of violence in international affairs'. As far as I know, it was the first time peace studies were taught at undergraduate level in a British university.

Mauritius

Balliol is known as 'the foreigners' college'. As a francophone I quickly met the Mauritian Pierre Hein (1957) (Balliol has a long-standing relationship with Mauritius). One thing led to another, and in 1965 I was Mauritius' government economist. A couple of years later I was asked whether I preferred to continue or become Professor of Economics at the brand-new University of Mauritius. I chose that and actually became its first employee of any kind.

There was a well-entrenched habit of sending young Mauritians to British or French universities, and there was no reason to change that. The University of Mauritius aimed to open tertiary education to young people who had not previously had access to it. In my field, we ascertained that that mainly meant the heirs to smallish family businesses. We adjusted PPE to this setting, especially in replacing philosophy with the more practical discipline of law. Since law and economics was a

'The aim was not to reproduce PPE but to cultivate the soil in which it was rooted: to foster a questioning mind, to encourage exploration and intellectual daring.'



Mauritius, Moka District Court c.1967. The university's first offices occupied the loft upstairs.

'The University of Mauritius aimed to open tertiary education to young people who had not previously had access to it. We adjusted PPE to this setting, replacing philosophy with the more practical discipline of law.'

well-known combination in French universities, and furthermore Mauritian law was based on the Napoleonic Code, we paired up for the purpose with the Madagascar branch of the University of Aix-Marseille's law faculty.

Since we were educating the scions of family firms, it was important that Dad be convinced of the value of what Junior was learning. We therefore invited the dads to nice dinners during which we gave them a glimpse of what that was.

Dad? Junior? Those were indeed the days: when I recommended we hire a woman sociologist, the Vice-Chancellor refused. One of the last throes of the colonial order, he had been dispatched from his British university in the manner of 'Go out and govern New South Wales' (to quote another Balliol man).

The VC spoke not a word of French. He was utterly unaware that in this country on the eve of independence, his secretary was one of the powers behind the movement to recognise the local vernacular, Kreol, as a proper language. Others were aware and thought her activities were entirely fitting in the new national university.

'University of Sussex Archive Film', a VHS of film reels made in the 1960s, ref. SxUOS1/1/5/1/20

Tutorials take root at Balliol-by-the-Sea.

Sunderland

I finished my salaried life as a United Nations official. In the week I was to retire I received a letter from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sunderland, recently formed from a number of tertiary institutions. The letter stated that I had been appointed Visiting Professor. I sent an e-mail back saying that I was delighted, but Visiting Professor of what? The answer came that the title was correct. Anne Wright, the Vice-Chancellor, explained on my first visit that all universities, no matter how new, quickly built walls to divide themselves into faculties, departments, disciplines, schools and such. The job of the visiting professors (she had appointed several of us) was to break them down. We were to ignore demarcation lines and do whatever we wanted – provided we could find faculty members willing to work with us.

My field was essentially economic ethics. It was stony ground within the university. However, there was a fine Gothic church marooned between a parking lot and the municipal swimming pool; an imaginative clergyman had found a variety of ways of turning it into a lively social centre. One of those was to run weekly discussions among the Sunderland business community. I was invited to contribute on ethics. The Vice-Chancellor approved: town–gown was one of the boundaries which needed transgressing.

International Geneva

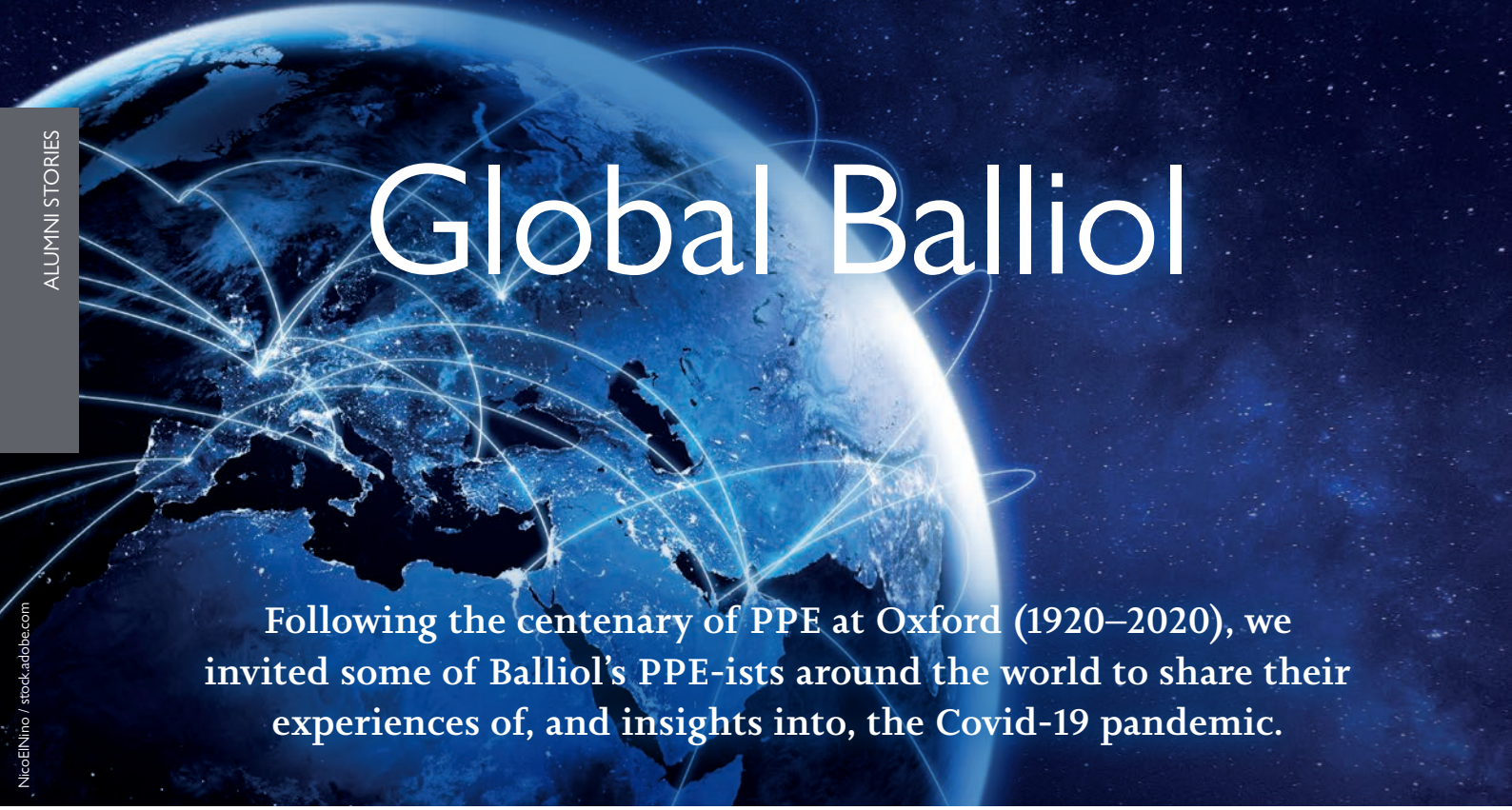
In 1999 three Geneva university institutions – the University, the Graduate Institute of International Studies and the Institute of Development Studies – formed the Geneva International Academic Network (GIAN). It started functioning around 2001. Supported by the State of Geneva and the Swiss federal government, its function was to distribute research grants to projects in which international organisations and academic institutions collaborated. I was chosen to preside over its Scientific Committee. To take one example, CERN was anxious to develop a way of performing laborious calculations by means of networks of individual computers. It joined forces with the World Health Organization, the universities of Basel and Geneva, an NGO and a University in Senegal to carry out epidemiological calculations on malaria in West Africa.

The unconventional collaborations in GIAN-supported projects pried all participants out of their comfort zones, but the meeting between different objectives and different ways of working was broadening for all.

Les liaisons fructueuses: the phrase sums up the most lasting lesson I learned reading PPE at Balliol.[1]

[1] *Les liaisons fructueuses*, ed. Randall Harbour & Edouard Dommen, Geneva, GIAN 2008

Global Balliol



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Following the centenary of PPE at Oxford (1920–2020), we invited some of Balliol's PPE-ists around the world to share their experiences of, and insights into, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sir Michael Arthur (1969) President, Boeing International, London

When I graduated in PPE in 1972 I could have had no idea about how the world would look today. The internet, universal connectivity, the end of the Cold War, hundreds of millions of people being lifted out of poverty, the global pivot to Asia, the rise of China, were yet to come. Today, overlay Covid and its catalytic role for further global change and you have an amazingly dynamic model.

In my first career as a British diplomat, pandemic affected me in a different way. In 1977 'Green Monkey Disease' (caused by the Marburg virus) broke out in what was then Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), where I was working. A leading US scientist who had been flown in to help handle the disease told me that if it had been a fraction of a percentage point more contagious it would have wiped out the world. That virus was a direct precursor of HIV/AIDS.

Forty something years on, in my second career I lead the international operations for Boeing and we face the Covid pandemic. It has decimated the aviation industry. In 2020 flights were a small fraction of those in 2019, international flights almost negligible, as governments imposed domestic lockdown and quarantine for travellers. So the impact on aeroplane makers like Boeing has been huge. We have had one

'Covid has been a seminal and transformative moment for the industry.'

of the toughest years in our 100-year history. Airlines delayed purchases. Our production system had to be rethought as we dropped the rate of production. This impacted our global supply chain. We have had to lay off thousands of staff globally.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. The prospect of widespread vaccination transforms the picture. Aeroplanes are safe environments and we have to help the travelling public understand that. The precautions taken, and the air flow design, mean that anyone sitting next to you, mask free, is the equivalent of 7 feet away. Air quality in a plane is hospital standard, with 99.9% protection against contagion. There is no health reason not to fly.

By later this year, we expect a significant pick-up in global travel. It may not be until 2023 or 2024 that we reach 2019 levels. But our long-term demand forecast over 20 years remains that, even post-Covid, the current world fleet will more than double.

So Covid has been a seminal and transformative moment for the industry.

The lesson of the Zairean pandemic and the AIDS crisis was that the world learned to adapt, despite the tragedies for those affected. So too no doubt for Covid. People, society, the economy will be changed, but we will recover. As with all big exogenous shocks, the geography of politico-economic loss and benefit will shift too.

Which takes us back to good old PPE. I found it a fantastic basis for learning how to operate in a changing and challenging world. Balliol PPE is still relevant for me after almost 50 years. So a big thank you to my then Tutor Andrew Graham (Master 2001–2011), among many others. And good luck to today's generation. PPE will prove a superb foundation for facing the challenges of the coming years.

Christopher Lord (1977) **Writer and translator, France**

So far so good. At the time of writing, in my little corner of rural France, the pandemic has had no discernible impact: no cases, no hospitalisations, no deaths. This is different in the old people's homes, where there are many victims among those already near the head of the queue. It is also different in cities, where the virus is a real threat, and where the anti-virus measures are more disruptive. People living in high-rise apartment blocks, perhaps with young children, feel with some justification that they have been put into a police state system. A high proportion say they don't want to be vaccinated: a Gallic variety of the anti-truth pandemic spreading in parallel with the virus itself.

As an independent writer and translator, I am safely insulated from human contact by the internet, so the main effect has been the indirect one of joining the worldwide economic slowdown. Over the last year, it seems that this has accelerated the trend for people to use nice sterile computers to do their translations, perhaps because translation agencies are finding it hard to pay their bills. I

'The pandemic is not just helping money to migrate upwards globally, but also accelerating the worst features of each individual society.'

wonder about all those office workers who have developed careers doing nothing of any value: climbing up ladders of corporate promotion towards lofty positions where they do nothing at all. Will the pandemic serve to protect them while they do this at home? It probably will. There is no sign of finance capitalism and competitive consumerism collapsing – the last bastions of civilisation.

I was in China a couple of weeks before the pandemic officially started, and in the infection zone. The pandemic is not just helping money to migrate upwards globally, but also accelerating the worst features of each individual society. America is more paranoid and delusional; Britain more chaotic and class-divided; China more repressive and xenophobic. France has its own characteristic schizophrenia. They would like to have a national saviour along the lines of Joan of Arc, Napoleon or General de Gaulle; but at the same time feel they should be storming the Bastille and parading some heads through the streets. What fills the gap is mainly celebrity gossip, but since the sad death of Johnny Hallyday, even that reliable placebo is looking questionable. The doings of Harry and Meghan make a poor second.

Roland Nash (1991)

Senior Partner at a private equity firm specialising in emerging markets, Barcelona

Until a year ago, a commitment to travel was a prerequisite for establishing the credibility to invest in emerging markets. Large offices in prominent buildings were another means of projecting competence. Covid has killed both. Our travel budget is down 90% and our new head office will be half the size and a quarter of the cost. Business has shifted rather than shrunk, with a worrying mania for anything that can be described as 'tech'.

Without travel, life has become more localised. Barcelona, Europe's most densely populated city, thrives on tourism, conferences, hospitality, festivals, bars and restaurants. Still recovering from the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, it has become a smaller, sadder place. Family-run restaurants and bars are either closing or surviving on the promises of government programmes and systematic non-payment of everything. The loss of many karate clubs, dance schools, language laboratories, pilates studios, micro-breweries, art-cinemas and all the other boutique aspirational enterprises that made the city so liveable in is the collateral damage of the policy response.

What kind of city will emerge? So much of Covid-19 has been like some crazy PPE thought experiment: 'If we assume everybody everywhere gets hit by a giant external shock, a pandemic for instance, what would be the political/economic consequences?' In Moscow in the mid-1990s, when I was working there, society was trying to dig itself out of an equally unexpected, system-wide shock. After the chaos and the disruption emerged a society split between those who had found a way to benefit and those who had lost

'Barcelona, Europe's most densely populated city, has become a smaller, sadder place.'

– a tension which is still exploited. I fear that when the various logistical obstacles to normal life have been lifted, something similar will mark Barcelona: a lot of people losing out and a huge bill still to be paid. Blame will be apportioned.

Jonathan Broomberg (1985)

Chief Executive Officer, Vitality Health International & Global Head of Health Insurance for Discovery Group, South Africa

'A heartening feature of the pandemic in South Africa has been a profound sense of social solidarity.'

As it has done in so many countries, Covid-19 has posed massive challenges in South Africa. The already overburdened public healthcare system, and in particular its healthcare workers, has taken significant strain and is feeling the effects of dealing with a huge second wave, now thankfully waning. In the main, the healthcare system has coped admirably: overall case fatality rates are in line with trends around the world, and South Africa is doing better than many other often better resourced countries. Although as I write we are just learning the painful news that the Astra Zeneca/Oxford vaccine, which was to be a key element of South Africa's vaccine programme, is not effective in preventing mild or moderate infections due to the novel virus variant that is predominant in South Africa at the moment, thankfully some of the other vaccines do appear to offer protection, which gives some cause for optimism. It does, however, seem that South Africa faces possibly another year or more before life can begin to return to something of a normal pattern.

While our healthcare system has done relatively well, the same cannot be said for our economy, which has taken a huge knock. The early complete lockdown almost certainly saved thousands of lives, as have the subsequent partial lockdowns, and the government's response has rightly been widely admired. However, these disruptions have caused substantial job losses and lasting economic pain in an economy with already very high unemployment levels, a limited social safety net and highly constrained fiscal resources to support and stimulate the economy as part of the recovery process. It is likely that the economy will take an extended period to return to its prior growth trend, creating substantial additional hardship for millions of citizens in the interim.

Rupert Read (1984)

Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of East Anglia, UK

It was like spotting a car crash about to happen but being powerless to stop it, despite frantically signalling what was about to occur.

Early in 2020, I started hearing tales of a mysterious viral pneumonia, which had infected dozens of people in the central city of Wuhan. I knew then the Precautionary Principle, which has been a major focus for me in recent years, was about to leap into more prominence. For it needed to play a big role in how governments tackled what already looked likely to become a genuinely huge issue.

Often described as a safety net in an uncertain and sometimes precarious world, the principle can perhaps most simply be described as a 'better safe than sorry' approach.

My colleagues in this field, including Nassim Taleb, were all on the same page and we immediately began trying to pre-empt the car crash by talking directly to governments, including behind the scenes. When inaction reigned, in English-speaking countries (though not in Australasia, which learnt swiftly from the effective responses in South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and – after a deadly initial delay – China), I published a multi-signed letter in a major UK newspaper urging swift precautionary action.

Sadly, our government preferred for some time a deadly 'herd immunity (by way of mass infection)' plan, and precautious action seemed, absurdly, very much a last resort – often occurring far too late, such as the first lockdown, which should have been in place much earlier. When is the most effective time to lock down, to prevent potential carnage? The answer is chastening: it is at the latest the moment you suspect that you have community transmission going on over which you have lost control.

As I write during the third lockdown, 1,564 have just been killed in a day by the virus in the UK (total death toll for the whole pandemic in New Zealand: 26). I pray that we learn the lesson from this national scandal. Future such crises – including looming ecological crises – need to be strangled at birth, not allowed to let rip.

Professor Rupert Read teaches Philosophy at UEA, working alongside some of the world's leading climate scientists. His academic work includes Ecological and Political Philosophy. He is the author of over a dozen books, including an e-book entitled 'A timeline of the plague year', chronicling the UK Government's response to the pandemic: details at www.rupertread.net/books.

A heartening feature of the pandemic in South Africa has been a profound sense of social solidarity, which has brought together private citizens, business, civil society and government in many shared initiatives to deal with the pandemic and its fallout. One of these is the Solidarity Fund, a public private partnership which was established immediately after the start of the pandemic and which rapidly raised R3.5billion from business and foundations. I led the Health response team in the Solidarity Fund for much of 2020, during which the fund disbursed over R2bn on health responses, including on large-scale purchases of PPE, and Covid-19 test kits, as well as on the local design and production of 20,000 CPAP ventilators suitable for use in general wards, which became the mainstay of hospital treatment for Covid patients.

‘I pray that we learn the lesson from this national scandal. Future such crises need to be strangled at birth, not allowed to let rip.’

‘Most of all, I am grateful to the public health experts for their robust and impartial advice, and for the scientists who have developed the vaccines that will allow an eventual return to normal life.’

Charlotte Denny (1991)

Policy Director (Land, Water, Climate) at the Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand

I’m writing this at the middle of an ordinary summer, painfully aware that in 2021 that statement itself is extraordinary. Christmas at the beach, bare feet, hot sand, swimming, barbecues, and books … My past self would only be surprised at the ubiquitous QR code at each entry way for Covid tracing.

How did we get here? In retrospect, it feels like a combination of good leadership and luck. New Zealand wasn’t particularly well prepared for a pandemic. We had a plan, based on managing a severe flu outbreak, but it didn’t survive contact with reality of the virus for long; had we been running by that playbook, we would have given up trying to eliminate Covid at the point in early April when we had multiple clusters and instances of community transmission.

Most of the countries that have handled the pandemic well have had recent experience of SARS; are developing countries with public health systems with experience of tackling infectious diseases; or like, Singapore, are highly planned technocracies. New Zealand fits none of these categories. (A few years ago, I interviewed a former senior New Zealand public servant, now working in Singapore. Singapore, he said, because of its history and geography, is one of the most paranoid countries in the world – always prepared for the next existential threat. New Zealand, also for reasons of history and geography, is its polar opposite.)

What we are good at is agility – it helps being a small country. Because of our geography, the first cases arrived in New Zealand comparatively late, giving our leaders time to rip up the plan and make a new one: elimination. Our first case was identified in late February. By mid-March, we were reading horrifying accounts from doctors and nurses on the frontlines of the overwhelmed health systems in Northern Italy. Prominent epidemiologists were arguing for a much tougher approach than the official pandemic plan. There were still relatively few cases; but concern was rising. At work we were drawing up plans for rotating people to work from home.

Then the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown – one of the strictest in the world. With so few cases, it felt audacious, and the contrast with other countries’ more lenient approaches was noted. In fact her judgement was spot on. In a novel pandemic, with the prospect of its exponential growth, every day of delay makes the measures needed to curb the growth more painful.

During lockdown I spent three weeks on a stint for another agency, working in the National Crisis Management Centre. I travelled through largely deserted streets, to a workplace with strict social distancing rules, and a group of public servants tackling all the questions that arise when you put an economy into cold storage. Colleagues were drawing up plans to close the borders, devising support packages for families and business, and the Ministry of Health was pulling in people from across the system to help bolster contact tracing. On my return to my home agency, I wrote the first draft of a recovery plan for the primary sector, with a strong theme of building back better.

I am full of respect for colleagues across the system who provided advice on so many complex and challenging issues, and for the essential workers who have kept our systems going. Most of all, I am grateful to the public health experts for their robust and impartial advice, and for the scientists who have developed the vaccines that will allow an eventual return to normal life.

Andrea Woodhouse (1994)

Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, United States

I currently live in the United States, where almost half a million people have died of Covid-19. But I work at the World Bank, so my work focuses on poorer countries: I used to work in Myanmar, and now I work on several countries across parts of Europe and Central Asia.

What is clear is that across the world this has been a pandemic not just of disease but of social inequality. The world has seen its most severe global recession since the Second World War, but this is playing out in profoundly unequal ways – exposing existing inequalities and exacerbating them. For the first time in two decades, global poverty is rising. The pandemic is expected to push up to 150 million more people into extreme poverty (below US$1.90/day). It is disproportionately affecting poor households through loss of work, declines in remittances, rising prices, and disruptions in services; and in countries that are affected by conflict, it may deepen protracted crisis.

Those who are already marginalised are bearing the brunt of this. Women, informal and migrant workers, refugees, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and sexual and gender minorities already have unequal access to jobs, housing, land, and finance and services such as health and education. The pandemic has mostly exacerbated such disparities. The mechanisms of this are dispiriting. Self-employed and informal workers have lost income but may not be adequately supported by government social safety nets. School closures and lockdowns have increased care responsibilities at home and pushed millions of women out of the workforce; domestic violence has also gone up. The pandemic has been hard for many to handle, but for poor households, who already have little cushion to cope with shock, the effects of such a huge shock can last for generations.

I have been working on a couple of things relevant to the pandemic. One is an effort to monitor the social impacts of the pandemic, including on conflict risks in the region I focus on. There's also my broader ongoing work, all of which has been affected by Covid recovery being the frame for policy discussion. For example, I'm involved in an analysis in one country of the social and jobs dimensions of green growth – what will happen if that country chooses a 'green' recovery vs. a 'business as usual' one: who will win and lose, and how can the social risks and benefits be managed so that the transition to a green economy is just? My personal hope is that the pandemic shifts the Overton window of what is politically feasible, with the recovery being used to forge a more equitable and greener path.

'What is clear is that across the world this has been a pandemic not just of disease but of social inequality.'

Yuan Yang (2008)

Deputy Bureau Chief for the *Financial Times*, Beijing

I am lucky to be able to roam quite freely in China, as the daily incidence of Covid is so low. In Beijing, I can meet friends, eat out, and go to karaoke without hindrance, apart from wearing a mask in public – something I've become used to for keeping my face warm while cycling! However, small recurrent outbreaks across the country mean that travel guidance can change from day to day, leading to plans being cancelled.

The main negative impact of Covid on my life has been the freeze on foreigners entering China. I cannot leave to visit my parents in the UK, for example, without risking being stranded. There has been almost no processing of visas for the past year, which has led to staff shortages across foreign media outlets. Since Covid began, several of my colleagues, including my bureau chief, have been stranded outside China. As a result I've taken on a lot more responsibility for coordinating our China coverage, and making sure our bureau is safe and happy.

As news emerged of a mysterious outbreak, my colleagues and I started covering the situation, both in Wuhan and from Beijing. The government

Felix Heilmann (2016)

Researcher, E3G, Berlin

I joined the climate politics think tank E3G after graduating in 2019. The first wave of the pandemic hit just as I had fully settled into the job, forcing me to move my laptop (and tea collection) to the home office. Despite the difficulties that came with this, mostly I am grateful for the privilege of having an interesting and worthwhile job in these uncertain times.

At E3G, we work on the political conditions and policies required to achieve progress on the way towards a zero-emissions future. Early in the crisis, in Zoom calls and WhatsApp chats, the climate community realised that the pandemic and economic crisis fundamentally alter the conditions of the struggle for climate safety. For instance, much-needed investments into clean technologies could be included in economic recovery packages. Or they could be ignored, making it much harder to mobilise these necessary investments in the future as governments grapple with smaller post-crisis budgets. The new topic of how to achieve a 'better recovery' therefore immediately became an important and additional part of my work.

Our key argument is that policymakers must differentiate between economic stabilisation

'The government is now on a mission to show that the virus originated from outside China, and thus absolve itself of responsibility.'

was initially slow to respond, and its layers of bureaucracy led to the destruction of life-saving information. Once it did respond, it got going quickly, through mass testing, strict quarantines, and broad lockdowns.

The government has become obsessed with the impact of the pandemic on its international reputation. Over the past year, the harassment and pressuring of foreign media in China, and of our sources, has become worse than anyone can recall. The government is now on a mission to show that the virus originated from outside China, and thus absolve itself of responsibility for its initial mishandling of the situation. This drive lays bare both how self-interested and also how tone-deaf Beijing's leadership can be.

Unfortunately, the UK and US governments' mishandling of Covid has given Beijing much to gloat about. There are many factors that led to this, but I am sure one was the fact that a novel virus outbreak in China seemed too far away, and to affect people too much unlike their own citizens, for leaders in London or DC to take it seriously at the outset.

measures and recovery measures: stabilisation efforts should focus on securing today's jobs and livelihoods, while more long-term recovery measures should be aligned with long-term targets, such as the transition to a climate neutral economy. Currently, I focus on the European Union's recovery package, addressing conditions for green spending in its governance as well as the measures currently being prepared in all EU member states that it will support.

As I write, the jury is still out on whether recovery measures will enable a shift towards more resilient and sustainable growth. Governments across the world have stressed the importance of 'building back better', despite fears that the crisis would absorb all political capital, but the measures implemented to date often still cement the status quo. The decisions taken over the coming months will be critical to ensure that rhetorical commitments are translated into change processes in the real economy.

'The new topic of how to achieve a "better recovery" immediately became an important and additional part of my work.'

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Stuart Bebb

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